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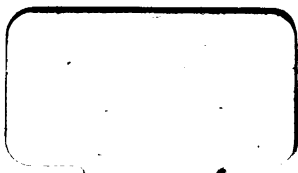


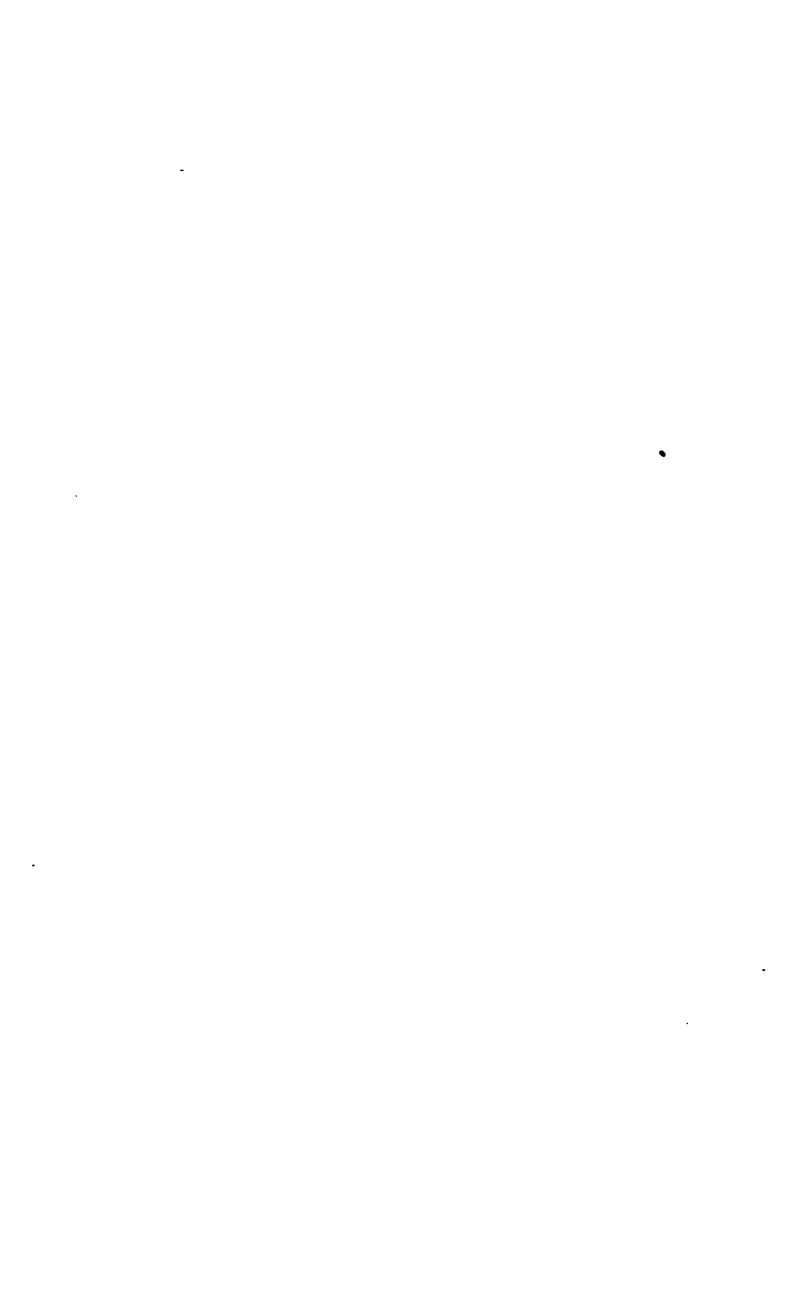
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# YOUNG HEARTS

A NOVEL

BY A RECLUSE.

WITH A PREFACE

BY MISS JANE PORTER

IN THREE VOLUMES

Thy blood and virtue contend for empire in thee!

Shakspeare.

VOL. I.

LONDON

SAUNDERS AND OTLEY, CONDUIT STREET.

1834.

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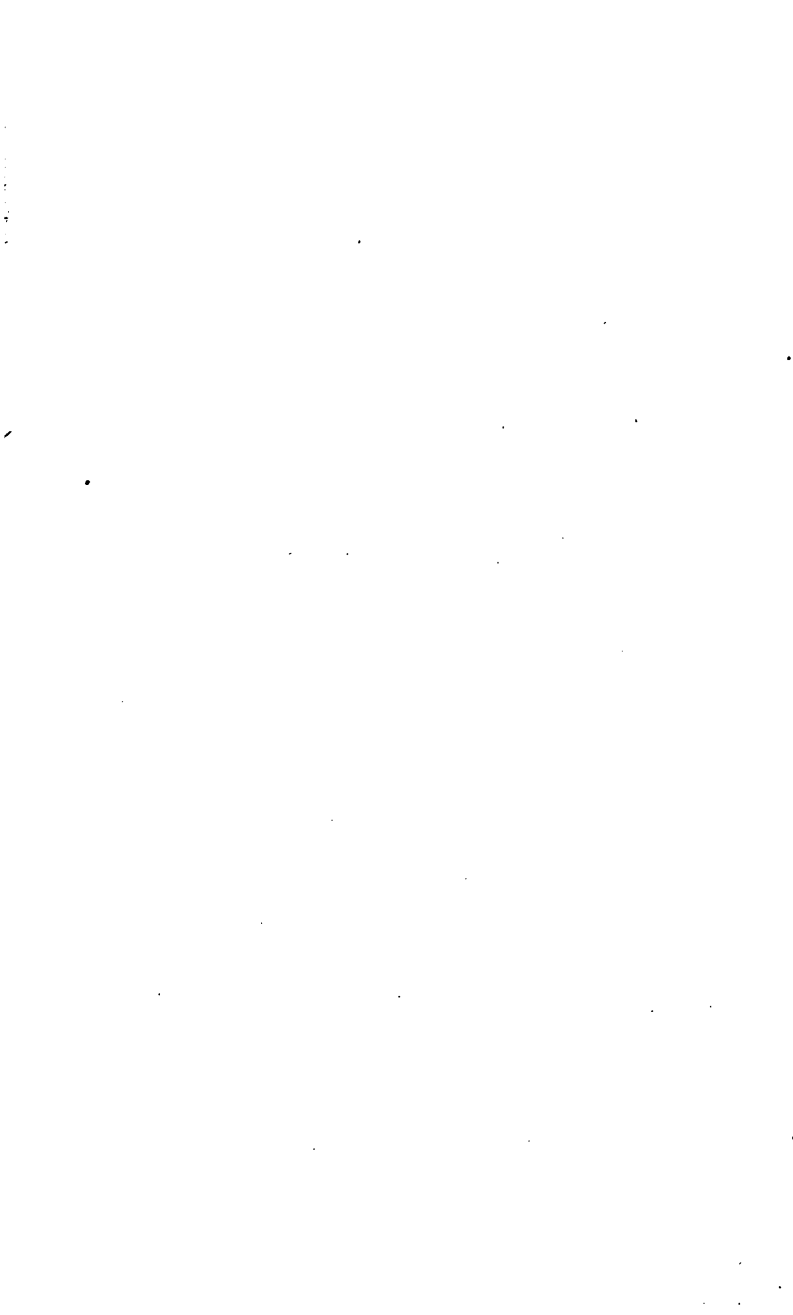
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TO  
LADY HAMLYN WILLIAMS,  
THE BRIGHTENER OF JOY,  
THE SOOTHER OF SORROW, AND THE FRIEND OF  
THE DISTRESSED;  
TO HER  
WHO IN THE WORLD, IS NOT OF THIS WORLD;  
TO THE  
WOMAN OF TASTE, AND THE CHRISTIAN MATRON;  
THIS WORK  
IS  
DEDICATED,  
BY THE RESPECT, AND STILL DEEPER SENTIMENT  
OF  
THE AUTHOR.

Nov. 1834.



## PREFACE

BY

MISS JANE PORTER.

---

THIS simple tale of *Young Hearts*, is written by one well acquainted with the generous throbs of the inexperienced age she treats of. And she tells the youthful history of such, not, indeed, as they are often made to beat in the gay, luxurious, and self-aggrandizing, self-

absorbing world of a metropolis ; but, according to the natural and ingenuous, but too often dangerously romantic, sensibilities of a secluded country life.

The generous and tender affections of young hearts, so situated, have therefore their shadow in these faithful pages ; shewing the extravagances to which both impulses may lead, when excited into passions, and permitted to reach the various points of perilous excess.

“ Young brother ! young sister ! ” the author, in every page addresses, in the spirit of her motto : “ Beware ! *your blood and virtue contend for empire in*

*ye!*" As ye give the victory, your happiness and honour, or your inward wretchedness and self-abasement, must be the result."

But it was not to write a tale of animated amusement, a story of gentle admonition, which were her only motives when taking up the pen in her little boudoir of deep retirement. It was to cheer a drooping heart that sat near her; it was to disperse the tears of affliction from beloved eyes looking on her; it was to say to that disconsolate mourner,—

"Intreat me not to leave thee! whi-



ther thou goest, I will go ; where thou lodgest, I will lodge ; thy lot shall be my lot : the Lord do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me !”

Nov. 1834.

# YOUNG HEARTS.

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## CHAPTER I.

“THOU art sadly changed of late, my gentle Cathleen,” said the volatile Mary Belville, as, with a light step, and a still lighter heart, she entered her dressing-room, followed by a young female of exquisite beauty. “Tell me,” she said, playfully taking the hand of her companion, “tell me it is but a freak of the little blind god, and I will pardon thy fretful humour, and strive to make thee once again my own merry Cathleen.”

A deep blush mantled on the cheek of

Cathleen. Not daring to meet the enquiring glance of her lovely friend, her eyes were fixed steadfastly upon a bunch of fresh gathered flowers, she had brought from home to grace the fair bosom of her foster-sister, and which she now held almost unconsciously in her hand.

“Thou art silent, Cathleen,” said Mary, thoughtfully; “there is more in this sadness than a being light and gay as I am, can guess at; but I will not chide thee, my sweet sister, and kind friend,” she continued, “for thou hast, doubtless, cause for thy present dullness; and yet, methinks, thou art over-careful of thy secret.”

Cathleen raised her dark eyes to the face of the speaker with a look in which anger and deep affection were strongly blended. “Do not think,” she said, while her voice trembled

from emotion, "that I give way to this painful and oppressive lowness without a cause; if a sigh escapes this bosom when the kindness of my friends should claim a smile, it is because grief is so deeply seated there, that never in this world a single ray of cheerfulness can enter it. I am not ungrateful, dearest Mary," she continued, "for thy love! My heart has long ceased to throb with the blissful feelings of youth, yet its fond, its devoted affection is as truly thine as ever."

Mary pressed the weeping girl within her arms. Her own bright and sunny features no longer wore the smile of happiness. She thought of the honest creature who had been a mother to her in the fretful hours of helpless infancy. For her sake, had Cathleen been even less dear to her, she would have given the world to have possessed the power

to banish from her mind the hidden sorrow which oppressed it.

Cathleen was the first to regain her composure. With a mournful smile, she raised the dear friend of her childhood, who still wept upon her bosom. Kissing off the tears that stole down her blooming cheeks, she reminded her that the duties of the toilet had yet to be performed.

“Thou shouldst have left thy sorrowful looks at home to-day, my sweet sister,” said Miss Belville, as she seated herself before the glass. “I sent for thee in haste, hoping that with thy skilful aid I might appear *passable* in the eyes of my father’s ward, and now thy dull talk has made a fright of me! What will the gay, the dear Harry Mordaunt say, when he sees the vaunted daughter of General Belville enter the drawing-room looking like some naughty child that has just been whipped?”

"The dear Harry Mordaunt!" repeated Cathleen, in a tone of surprise, at the same time enquiring if he were not a perfect stranger at the villa.

"Thou art right in thy conjectures, Cathleen," replied the lovely girl, who had now recovered her own accustomed gaiety; "he is indeed a stranger to all within these walls, my father excepted."

"It is impossible to love what we have never known or seen," said Cathleen.

"But I *have* seen him we speak of," cried Miss Belville; "seen him, my sweet Cathleen, constantly in my dreams: through the gloom of night he is ever with me; there is not a scene of pleasure, whether the ball, the concert, or the theatre, that I do not fancy him by my side. In my imagination, for the last three years, I have laughed, danced, sung, quarrelled with him, every hour in the day

ay, and loved him too, better than any thing in the world. From the description that my dear father gave me of him, I am certain that Harry Mordaunt is every thing that is delightful, good, and amiable. His gay, independent spirit, his kindness to those who are in distress, the General frequently mentions in conversation, with evident pride and satisfaction. My dear father is an excellent painter, and the picture he has given me of his young ward is one of such surpassing excellence, that it is no wonder I should long to behold the original."

"I trust he is equally prepared to love and esteem you, my darling sister;" said Cathleen. "Thy hours, unclouded by care, will pass swiftly in the presence of one so amiable, and who is already dear to you."

"But *I* hope that he may not yet have

wasted a thought on me," replied Mary laughing. "You forget how delightful will be the task of convincing him that I am really necessary to his happiness. I have also heard from my father, that he is as great a lover of pretty mischief as myself; so far all will run smoothly; but now comes what will give me a great deal of trouble."

"And what is that, pray?"

"Henry is a professed admirer of the fair sex," said Mary with a sigh; "and yet the tormenting monkey has never been known to acknowledge that any woman possessed the power to retain his undivided affection. Do you not think that it would be a very meritorious action to convince him of his folly?"

Cathleen, with a gentle smile, put her finger on the ruby lips of the fair and happy girl, whose light and buoyant spirits gave to her



fairy form and face almost a childish appearance. "I will place a single flower in the bright ringlets of thy hair," she said, and taking up the bouquet she had brought from her own garden, Cathleen drew from thence a moss-rose, and placed it on the snowy brow of her foster-sister.

Mary fastened in another beside it, observing, with an arch smile, that it should be her first gift to Harry Mordaunt; "that is," she added playfully, "if he does not object to the thorns."

"There is nothing bright or beautiful in life," said Cathleen, mournfully, "without its thorns, and far more dangerous ones than these; for till they have wounded, we dream not of their existence. These are visible to the eye, and, therefore, more easy to guard against."

Often did Mary pause on the stairs as she descended to the drawing-room, to listen to the tones of that voice she had taught herself to believe must be the sweetest in the world. The happy joyous laugh of youth met her ear; it was so full of gay frankness, so like her own, it could only be Harry Mordaunt's; and, with a beating heart, she hastened to join those who were anxiously waiting for her appearance.

The General heard the light step of his darling child, and, with a face beaming with good-humour, he met her at the door. Mary, blushing and trembling with apprehension and pleasure, dared not raise her eyes to where the object who had so long engrossed her thoughts was standing. With downcast looks and crimson cheeks, did she remain motionless before her father's ward. The warm greeting,

the gentle pressure of his hand which still retained hers, as if waiting for some word of welcome, had no power to break the spell. No sound escaped her lips; she felt faint and sick with apprehension, lest the first glance at *him* who now stood beside her, should too quickly convince her that the bright and sunny features, and graceful form, her own vivid fancy had given to Harry Mordaunt, lived not in the original of her picture.

Wondering at her silence, and pitying her girlish confusion, the General pressed her affectionately to his bosom, at the same time telling his ward, that by the next day Mary would be as much at home in his society as if they had known each other from the cradle.

Young Mordaunt thought that such a thing was not wholly improbable, and most fervently

did he wish it; yet, while he gazed at the still piece of loveliness that hung on the arm of his guardian, he felt it almost impossible that Miss Belville should ever become the laughter-loving companion of his mirthful hours.

Various were the stratagems made use of by the General to induce his beautiful daughter to enter into conversation; fruitless were all his attempts. Mary might have composed fifty grave essays on a china plate during the time of dinner, for nothing else seemed for a moment to have power to engage her attention. The cloth removed, she as quickly transferred her devotion to a bunch of grapes.

“Hal, my boy!” cried the General, “you grow more like your poor dear mother every time I see you. I was always as fond of you as if you had been one of my own. To be sure, I was to have married your mother,

if the fates had not willed it otherwise. Well, perhaps I found quite as good a wife in my excellent Mary. She was not my first love, but that's nothing after all ; what I was going to observe is, that, dear to me as you have been from childhood, you young madcap ! if you continue to remind me so much of old times with that laughing face of thine, I shall forget I am old myself, and not be able to live without you."

Young Mordaunt grasped the extended hand of the kind speaker, and assured him, that nothing would give himself so much happiness as being ever near him, and sharing with Miss Belville the delightful occupation of contributing to his comforts and amusement.

" Comfort, my dear boy," replied the General, warmly pressing the hand of his ward ;  
" odds bobs ! I think a man ought to be horse-

whipped who would not acknowledge himself to be in the seventh heavens with two such blessings as Mary and yourself smiling before him! Come hither, my darling," he continued, turning fondly to his daughter, "come and kiss thy father."

Mary flew into his extended arms: placing her on his knee, he parted the chesnut ringlets that rested on her forehead, and imprinted on it the kiss of parental love. "Thou art a silly girl," he said, proudly patting her blooming cheek; "thou art not like thyself to-day, my merry daughter. Time was when I have seen thee fly to give thy welcome to a friend of thy old father's, with a step so light, that had the floor been strewn with roses, they could scarce have felt the pressure of that little foot."

Mary hid her blushing face on the shoulder

of the General, who said, with an arch look at his ward, " Mary might be plotting some mischief, she is so silent. I shouldn't at all wonder, Hal, if it isn't against *you*. Whenever any extraordinary wicked prank is in agitation, my little witch is always as gentle as a lamb—as meekly unconscious of every thing that's passing around her, as the demurest lover of peace and quietness could wish her to be. But once let the mine be ready for the match, and Mary Belville becomes a spark of fire—papa, nor aught in his garrison, are spared,—in an instant, the grave, sedate, precise young lady, starts into a good-for-nothing, romping, giggling little baggage, that in less than five minutes can set the whole house in an uproar. Dogs are barking, the maids are running up-stairs and down-stairs in every direction; even the stable boys catch the infection, and venture as far as the hall-door to get a peep at

the fun, while the old parrot I brought with me from Jamaica sends forth such a volley of discordant sounds on beholding the exploits of his young mistress, that what with his screaming, the women's chattering, and Miss Mary's ungovernable glee, my house may be taken by passers-by, unacquainted with its owner, for a mad-house, and myself, perhaps, for one of the keepers."

"Delightful!" exclaimed young Mordaunt; "this is better than Queen Mab! My dear sir, this is just my own mode. Surely if Miss Belville knew what an acquisition my services will be, in those scenes of frolic,—how I can plot and plan, and execute within an inch of her life—and my own, perhaps,—she would surely stretch forth her fair hand to welcome one whose taste and habits appear to be so like her own."

"Hal, my dear boy," said the warm-hearted



General, "you shall plan and execute as much as you please,—you shall have every thing that your soul can desire, while you stop with me. Innocent fun, Hal, your foolish old guardian will delight in as much as yourself. I think thou art too kind in thy nature," he continued, "to give a moment's pain to any one intentionally, even in thy wildest moods; I therefore give you free liberty to follow the bent of your own frolic and whim, or rather, I might say, of this gipsy's."

A servant now entered to inform the General, that a person was waiting in the library to speak to him on business.

"If ever I choose a wife," cried Harry Mordaunt, as he flung himself on a couch opposite to Miss Belville, "she shall be dumb, or if not dumb, one who cares not to speak,

except when spoken to, and not even then if I am not in the humour to be answered."

Mary bit her lip to prevent a laugh, while Henry, appearing to be perfectly unconscious of her presence, continued. "I doat upon a silent woman, one who is wise and knows her place. A gentle, modest creature suits my fancy,—one who dares not trust her eyes to look at him she would give the world to see, much less her voice to speak to him. My wife shall be"——

"A simple fool, if she be all that you would have her," said Miss Belville archly, as she raised her eyes for the first time to the glowing face of her companion.

Delighted at the success of his stratagem, young Mordaunt, with a self-chastised look, begged that she would pardon the rudeness he had been guilty of. "It is a most unfor-

fortunate habit I have contracted," said he, respectfully taking her hand, "and yet one that I frequently indulge in whenever I fancy myself alone, of giving utterance to my thoughts aloud. Had you not spoken, I should in all probability have soliloquized for an hour, forgetting that I had the honour of your presence."

"Oh, pray proceed," replied Mary, while a mischievous smile played around her beautiful lips; "do not let my being here spoil your enchanting picture of a wife, I beseech you."

Young Mordaunt looked confused as he met her sportive yet searching glance, and remained silent.

"Say, grave sir, what may you be studying *now*?" enquired she, as she gaily rose and placed her hand on the back of his chair.

Henry smiled in his turn, but maintained

a provoking silence. For a moment Mary paused to gaze on features her imagination, vivid as it was, had scarcely done justice to; and her young heart throbbed with rapture as her quick glance discovered that the countenance of the long-expected ward of her father was indeed a faultless one.

Finding there was no hope of obtaining an answer to her enquiry, she said in a low voice, —“ If it were not from the fear of being called an impertinent, I would ask what subject is now your mental soliloquy? I love to learn! Perhaps it is some problem you find difficult to solve;—and yet methinks it must indeed be a hard one to puzzle the wise head of my dear papa’s great philosopher.”

“ You think right, my sweet interrogator,” replied Mordaunt, raising his eyes to the playful face that leant over him. “ Suppose,” he

added gaily, "that I gratify your curiosity, will you promise not to be offended?"

"Most willingly," cried Miss Belville.

"I will then confess," said Henry, shaking his head, "that the sight of you has suggested to my mind a question, the solution of which promises to cause me some trouble."

"The sight of *me!* that's impossible," replied Miss Belville, looking archly at him through her long dark eyelashes. "The sight of me cannot have given birth to any question the simplest body of my acquaintance knows not how to answer."

Henry assured her that without her own aid the case was hopeless, as he found he should never be able to decide fully and satisfactorily on the subject that puzzled him.

"Oh! now I guess what it is!" rejoined Mary playfully. "You are at a loss to disco-

ver which I possess the greatest share of— folly, or”——

“All women have their follies,” cried Henry, gently interrupting her and holding up his finger, while she vainly endeavoured to finish speaking. “To put an end, however, to *this fierce contention of our wits*, I will impart to you, lovely Miss Belville, the important question which, for the last half-hour, I have so seriously been endeavouring to answer.”

“Truly,” exclaimed Mary laughingly, “I begin to suspect that the only difficulty lies in the seriousness of your dulness. Were you half as wise as I expected to find you, you would by this time have found a hundred answers, instead of being compelled to beg one of poor silly me.”

“You grow severe, my lady Beatrice! have a care,” observed young Mordaunt, “that you



do not help me to solve the *problem*, without knowing it yourself."

"Prithee ask me what you will, and I will reply with truth," said Miss Belville with a beseeching look. "Did you not say without my aid you must remain in darkness?"

"Truly I did," cried Henry, "and as I know a woman's curiosity cannot brook delay"—

"'Twere best to satisfy it quickly," cried Mary. Therefore, what is the mighty question I am to answer by your desire, seriously and without equivocation?"

"Seriously then, and without equivocation," replied young Mordaunt, as he pressed her hands closely within his own, "am I for the future to look upon the fair daughter of General Belville as a wit, a coquette, or a simple-

ton? To which of these characters does she give the preference?"

Mary felt the warm blood rush to her forehead, as unable to escape she stood blushing and embarrassed before the smiling Henry, who enjoyed her visible confusion. Quickly, however, recovering her self-possession, she replied, "The choice of my character I leave entirely to yourself; but before you finally decide, you must take one thing into consideration."

"And what is that?" enquired he.

"That I can sustain all *three* to perfection," she replied; "and therefore it would be a great pity to only allow me to personate one."

"You shall be any thing you like," returned the charmed Henry; "for be what you will, you must ever be one of the most fascinating of your sex."



Miss Belville raised her bright and sparkling eyes to his face, saying with bewitching naïveté, as she dropped him a low boarding-school courtesy, "If it is not an impertinent question on my part, am I from this day to consider Mr. Mordaunt as a grave, severe, moralizing stoic, 'who doats upon a silent woman,' or as the gay, kind hearted mad-cap his indulgent guardian has represented him to be?"

Henry declared he would be all the General had described him, and any thing else he or she pleased. "I feel convinced," said he, "that my beloved guardian has ever indulgently loved me. From him I have never concealed a thought. In what better character, then, can I strive to win the esteem of his lovely daughter than in that which he truly approves?"

"You are right, quite right," replied Mary, who was delighted with the mutual frankness which seemed likely to subsist between them for the future. "And now," she added, with a smile of bewitching sweetness, "we perfectly understand each other."

"I am very happy to hear it," cried the General, whose smiling, good-natured face was just visible, as he stood peeping through the half-open door. "It is high time to be so," he continued; "I like to see all silly still nonsenses done away with when young people are going to reside under the same roof, and eat at the same table. Why, Hal, my boy! you look more like some school lad that's condemned to undergo a flogging for robbing an orchard, or pilfering a hen-roost, than a lively young fellow turned five-and-twenty, who has been amusing himself for the

last hour by saying civil things to a pretty girl."

"Dear father," replied Mary, "Mr. Mor-daunt has promised"——

"Call him Henry, Mary, or Hal," said the General, interrupting her; "bless my heart, child! you must not make a stranger of my boy, it will render him quite uncomfortable."

The young people laughed heartily at the conclusion of the old gentleman's speech, and assured him that, for the future, he should have no occasion to complain that they were less comfortably warm-hearted than himself.

"And now, my own dear father," said Miss Belville, "I will tell you what *Henry* has promised."

"So, so, you have been making promises already, have you, Hal?" observed the General, smiling on him affectionately; "early days

for that sort of work ; but I have no doubt, whatever they may be, you will do your best to keep them."

" I hope I shall, my dear sir," replied young Mordaunt ; " for it would give me more uneasiness than I can well express, to merit your driving me from the sweet paradise to which you have brought me."

" Never knew you break your word in my life, Hal ; but what says my little girl ?"

Mary now informed her father of Henry's determination to remain, as far as lay in his power, all in the way of " merry mischief," that his guardian had described him. The old gentleman listened, laughingly, to his fair child, as, with eyes brimful of happiness, in the innocence of her heart she repeated all that had passed between herself and Henry during the time he was in the library. Kiss-

ing the forehead of his blooming daughter, the General placed her hand in that of young Mordaunt, saying, as he gazed with pride and pleasure on each happy face, "God bless you both, my children! and now that you do understand each other, I trust that you will strive in every way to contribute to that harmony and happiness which it has ever been my wish should subsist between you."

The remaining part of the day was spent in planning occupations for the next. Mary was in raptures with her companion; he was so lively, so sweet-tempered, that she felt no fear that her sallies would offend him. Henry addressed her like an affectionate brother, and Mary quickly forgot that she had only known him a few short hours.

There was an indescribable charm in the manners of young Mordaunt, that never failed

to win the affection and esteem of those around him. That easy familiarity, that determination to be happy, which, when folly and ignorance are the sources from whence it springs, makes the society of some people so truly disgusting, while that of Henry was sought for with an eagerness which proved he could never give offence. His was that happy playful freedom that banishes restraint almost imperceptibly, accompanied by the most delicate attention to the wants and comforts of others, striving to render every one as contented and joyous as himself. He laughed and talked with the freedom of an old acquaintance to those of his own age, listened with respectful attention to the old, and entered with avidity into all the sports and amusements of childhood. It was no wonder, then, that young Mordaunt should possess

the power to make the most fastidious cast aside their reserve, and join with him in the merry laugh and lively conversation. In fact, Henry was universally beloved by all who knew him.

Miss Belville, as she listened to his rich mellow voice, and watched the varying expression of his changeful features, felt that Harry Mordaunt was a being born to inspire affection in the coldest bosom, and a sigh escaped her lips as she thought how many besides herself, and, perhaps, far her superior in personal attractions, would think no sacrifice too great to win by every stratagem so rich a treasure as his undivided love. But I shall be always near him, remembered Mary, and though he may not give me the envied preference, he will at least regard me as a sister and a friend.

Cheered by this pleasing reflection, Miss Belville gave way to the natural liveliness of her disposition, and appeared as easy, and as happy, in the presence of her diverting companion as the jocund old General could desire, who did not fail to remind his ward, when they parted for the night, that his prediction was verified, and that Mary Belville, when they met at breakfast, would greet him with as kind a smile, as if they had indeed known each other from the cradle.



## CHAPTER II.

It was a bright and beautiful morning, when Harry Mordaunt, with a light heart, threw open his chamber window to inhale the fine breeze from off the opposite hills. Splendid was the scenery by which the villa belonging to his guardian was surrounded; it lay in the bosom of a deep valley, bordered by a smooth and glassy stream, on whose calm surface was reflected numerous groupes of trees that hung from the rocky ground above it, and appeared to the eye almost suspended

in the air. Beds of roses lay beneath the windows, scenting with their delicious perfume the soft dew of heaven. Groves of acacias, and of the most brilliant flowering shrubs, were every where to be seen, some leading to a delightful grotto or temple, others to the water, where a boat invited those in search of pleasure to unfold its snowy sails, and glide silently through the narrow passes of the towering precipices by which this earthly paradise was nearly surrounded.

There was but one path visible to the searching gaze of the admiring Henry, by which the grounds of the villa might be quitted, without taking that which led to the next village by the high carriage road. The one that now attracted his notice, was approached by a gate at the end of a long shrubbery walk to the left of the house,

and only parted from the garden by a small branch of the stream; the eye could then trace it for more than a mile, winding round the steep and rugged hills, now lost in the thick foliage of some hanging wood, then visible again on the open plain above it. The gradual rise of the opposite ground enabled those whose sight was not impaired by age, to distinguish every object that moved in the distance as plainly as if it had been within a few minutes' walk.

Henry gazed with rapture on the fairy scene, secretly hoping that his guardian would invite him to spend the whole of the summer with himself and the fascinating Mary. Where can I pass my time so happily, thought the volatile, yet kind-hearted young man; in the society of the General and his lovely daughter, I shall cease to remember that I

am an orphan. Mary will treat me with the warm affection of a beloved sister; with her I shall wander through the delightful solitude of yonder woods, and converse on those subjects most dear to her young and joyous heart. I shall watch over her with the tenderness of a brother, shield her from all danger, and, if possible, from a moment's pain.

Delighted with the bright picture he had drawn, he exclaimed, "Happy, thrice happy, Harry Mordaunt! thou art indeed one of Fortune's favourites. The wealthiest of thy acquaintance would gladly part with a portion of their treasured gold to purchase so brilliant a fate as thine. The riches of the Indies could not buy the exquisite rapture, and the bright sunny hours thy better genius has now in store for thee. A doating and generous guardian is thine, who is ever seeking to add

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to thy comforts, and promote thy welfare ; while a light and fairy form is destined to hover near thee, administering to thy wants, with a smile of guileless innocence, and a voice of gentle love !”

The General was already in the breakfast-parlour when Henry entered. With a hearty shake of the hand, he welcomed his young ward, observing, that he was glad to find that he was as great a lover of early rising as himself. Henry replied that he was agreeably deceived in the time, for that he had imagined it to be much later, having forgotten to wind up his watch when he retired for the night.

“ Half-past seven exactly,” said the General, looking at his repeater ; “ and now, my dear boy, if you have no objection, we will take breakfast. Mary has been out this hour ;

she is fond of a ramble, when the weather is fine, and that she may enjoy herself without the fear of inconveniencing me, I never wait her return."

Henry was going to remark, that he should think the meal far more delicious with the lovely Mary by his side, when a gentle tap at the door announced a visitor.

"Come in, my lad, come in," exclaimed the General, who was evidently aware of who the intruder was. The door partly opened, and the black and shining face of an Indian boy, to the astonishment of Henry, was seen gazing through the aperture, cautiously looking round the apartment; his curiosity was satisfied, and he glided silently into the room, closing the door after him, then stood with his eyes fixed on the ground, as if waiting for an invitation to advance.

“Come hither, lad, and take thy seat at the table,” said the General, in a voice of kind encouragement. “Thou art much too modest, Pompey,” he continued, as he observed the black turn his eyes to where Henry was seated, and retire still farther from the offered chair. “This gentleman, Pompey, is my ward; you have heard me talk of him many a time, you young rogue.”

Fixing his dark orbs on the face of the wondering Henry with a look of deep scrutiny, the boy approached towards him with a quick and hurried step, and falling on one knee before him, he pressed the hand of young Mordaunt to his lips, saying, “Pompey love him much, him glad to see good massa’s friend. Pompey have three good massas now.”

“Well said, my worthy lad!” exclaimed

Henry, as he kindly raised the black from his kneeling posture, while he could scarcely refrain from smiling as he glanced his eye over the person of his new acquaintance, who, from his height and figure, could scarcely have attained the age of fourteen. His form was slight, and peculiarly graceful; while from his fashionable attire, expensive ornaments, and highly perfumed handkerchief, the little Hindoo coxcomb might, but for his ebony complexion, have passed for some young sprig of nobility.

“ Well, Pompey,” enquired the General, “ how do you fare now at the hall—how do they treat you, my lad ? ”

“ Very good, and very bad, massa,” said the boy.

“ Indeed ! ” replied the General ; “ and who is it that ill-uses you ? I thought you



and the domestics were good friends by this time."

"Ah, massa!" said the Indian, drawing his chair close to the table, with a look of grave importance, "old butler bad man—him one old rogue. Him say Pompey no gentleman; then Pompey call him stupid white humbug, and run at him in one big passion, and then him sneak away."

"Upon my word, my young master," cried Mordaunt, "you are a perfect hero."

"Pompey like a raging lion when him roused. Pompey see much every day what him think bad, but black boy no like to tell old massa."

"That's right, my lad," observed the General. "The best thing you can do is, to hear, see, and say nothing. You have one excellent friend at least in the family; Miss Betty will take your part, I'm sure."

At the mention of his young protectress, Pompey placed the cup of coffee he had just received on the table; gratitude and affection were the only feelings that name awakened in the bosom of the Indian, and resting his dingy hand on the knee of Mordaunt, who sat next him, he said, "Ah, massa Mordaunt, when you see her, you say she one angel. Pompey die for lily-white misse—she kind to black boy; she feed him, clothe him like gentleman, and nurse him when him ill. Pompey fly anywhere good misse bid him go, but him no stir when bad old butler speak."

Henry assured the boy that he would take the first opportunity good fortune offered, to become personally acquainted with Miss Betty Higginbottom, at the same time kindly enquiring the cause of his dislike to the butler at the hall.

"Nobody like him, massa," replied Pompey, who by this had forgot his bashfulness, and was devouring the pile of muffins which the General had placed before him. "Nobody like him, massa," he repeated; "dey all say him very bad man, but nobody dare say to nobody what Pompey says of him."

"And pray, my young gentleman, what do you presume to say of so great a personage as Mr. Gibson?" enquired the General, with a look of assumed gravity.

Rising from his seat, and cautiously glancing his eyes over the apartment, Pompey placed his lips close to the ear of General Belville as, in a low voice, he replied, "Pompey say him one old thief, massa; him steal good massa's wine, and cheat negro-boy of his money. When him ask him in pantry, and try to teach him bad game, white man learn when him want to rob his friend."

“ And so the old rascal drinks his master’s wine, and steals your money,” said Henry, who was nearly convulsed with laughter at the droll gestures and whimsical manners of their sable companion.

“ Then him try make Pompey thief.”

“ Indeed !” cried the General, with a frown of displeasure.

“ Yes, massa ; Pompey say him want his money when him lost it, then bad old man laugh, and bid him go and get some of lily-white misse’s ; then Pompey walk up close to him in one big passion, and him shout in his ear till white man shake with fear.”

“ Well, my brave lad, and what did you say to the old scoundrel ?” said young Mordaunt, patting the glossy hair of the boy, who had worked himself into a rage from the quickness of his feelings.

“ Me tell you what Pompey say, massa.

Me took hold of his two whiskers, and say, massa Gibson, you one frightful wicked old thief, you try to make poor black boy like yourself; but him no learn of you, for you one old rogue, and bad christian. You no like misse and kind massa, they good christians, and teach negro him prayers."

" Good boy, good boy," cried the General ;  
" you did right; never let any body persuade you to that which is wrong. I fear Gibson is not what he ought to be, or he would never have been sinful enough to put a dishonest action into the head of a child like yourself."

" Ah, massa, Pompey die ten times before him do bad thing!" replied the negro. " Kind misse cry and fret if poor black boy ill, and sit by him all day, and say she buy him fine things, when him better, and bring him nice meat to coax him to eat. Ah, massa," he con-

tinued, while tears of gratitude almost choked his utterance, "Pompey, him black face, but wicked butler him black heart.—Pompey hate him—Pompey's breast swell with rage when asked to wrong good misse."

Young Mordaunt was prevented from making the good-natured reply his kind heart had prompted, by the entrance of Miss Belville, who, throwing her arms round the neck of her father, imprinted on his lips the kiss of fond affection, at the same time enquiring tenderly after his health. The General assured her he was never better in his life. Turning to Henry with a fascinating smile, she said playfully, "Though last, not least in my remembrance, dear Henry, good morning."

Mordaunt raised her extended hand to his lips. Mary looked the picture of health and innocence: she had been to pay a visit to

Walter Maynard, the father of her foster-sister; he was indisposed and wished to see her. The keen air of the common had heightened the colour on her fair cheek, and her bright blue eyes were beaming with contentment and good humour. Suddenly remembering that she had forgot to notice the negro boy, who had risen from the table on her entrance, and who now remained at a respectful distance, she turned to where he was standing, and with an arch smile beckoned him towards her. Pompey's face brightened in an instant, as he returned her glance of kind encouragement with a low bow.

"Come hither, Pompey," said the playful girl. - In a moment the boy was by her side. "You give my father so much of your attention, Pompey, and he is ever so fond of listening to your merry tales, that you forget occa-

sionally that he has a daughter." Drawing a chair close beside her own, that he might sit beside her, she continued, " I prithee, Pompey, let me hear your voice; I think indeed you have forgotten me."

" Pompey not forget dear misse, him brought misse present."

" I thought the young dog had not come empty handed," cried the General, " though he has been so sly about it. I knew by the glance of his eye there was something in the wind."

Mary requested to see what he had brought her. Pompey flew from the room, and returned in an instant with a basket of peaches, and a large bundle of flowers. Placing both of them at her feet, he stood silently contemplating them with evident satisfaction.

" These flowers are beautiful," remarked



Miss Belville, "and the peaches are the finest I have ever seen. Indeed, Pompey, I almost fear your gallantry, and the kindness of your young lady, will produce a scarcity of fruit at the hall."

"I fear the same," observed her father.

"Massa no cause for fear," replied Pompey.

"Misse give freely, and not rob old massa. When Pompey ask for them, misse go in garden and help pick them."

"Miss Betty is extremely kind," said Mary; "but did she send me any message? Are we likely to see her in the course of the day?—What are you looking for, Pompey?" she continued, observing that he was searching diligently in every pocket of his dress.

"Pompey looking for what him no find," he replied gravely. "Pompey think him put it in this one, but him no feel it. Ah, ha!"

he exclaimed, as he drew his hand exultingly from the very bottom of his pocket, and with it a piece of crumpled paper, which he placed carefully on his knee, while he smoothed it with the palm of his hand. With an approving look he held it for a moment between his finger and thumb; his quick eye discovered another crease; again the soiled and dirty looking note was consigned to the knee, and the pressure of both palms was applied to it as a last resource.

A smile of triumph illumined the features of the negro, as he slowly, and evidently with a feeling of doubt, raised his hands, and perceived the success of his stratagem. Rising from his seat with a self-satisfied air, he walked towards Mary, who, convulsed with laughter, had retired with Henry to a distant window. With a low bow he pre-

sented the unsealed note, not forgetting before he gave it, to examine it once more, that he might be fully convinced of the respectability of its appearance.

Fair and spotless looked the paper, contrasted with his own ebony skin, but, alas! when Mary stretched forth her white and delicate fingers to receive it, poor Pompey felt fatally assured that his labours had been fruitless, and with a deep sigh he returned to the side of the General.

“ I think, my dear friend,” said Miss Belville, “ you will be highly delighted when you see the writer of this epistle. Indeed, the whole family will afford you a fund of amusement.”

Henry enquired if he might hear the contents of the note; and Mary in a low voice read to him the following lines—

“ Dear, dear Miss Belville,

“ Your loving friend, Betty Higginbottom, sends you this, with the most fervent love and a basket of peaches. Our Pompey says he wants to give you a big bundle of flowers, and so I take the opportunity to send you this here note, hoping it will find you happy and gloriously well. I think you have quite forgot the way to the hall, for it seems many a long wearisome day since I saw you there. Pray come very, very soon, and, God bless you, my dear friend. You will be welcome as the flowers in May!

“ Your's, in haste,

“ BETTY HIGGINBOTTOM.

“ Turn over.

“ Ma' says, promises are like pie crusts, made to be broke! but I hope yours are not. So, once more, God bless you. “ B. H.”

"Upon my word," said Henry, as she concluded, "a most elegant epistle! I wish you joy of your *delightful* acquaintance. Surely," he continued, with a look of surprise, "you are not upon visiting terms with the writer of that letter?"

Miss Belville assured him she and her family were kind-hearted worthy people, though certainly uncourtly and uneducated. "They are not without their good qualities," said she, "and the kindness I feel for Betty, often leads me to call at the hall."

Young Mordaunt smiled doubtingly.

"My father will give you a description of the whole family," continued Miss Belville.

"Not forgetting the *delightful* Miss Betty!" exclaimed Mordaunt. "I hope to have a full-length picture of her charming sylph-like form."

“Have a care,” said Mary, with an arch smile, “how you laugh at my young friend. The world will scarcely think you sincere, since I believe there are not many of your sex who will be able to discover faults either in the person or the manners of an heiress.”

“An heiress! Merciful powers!” cried Henry, “why she can hardly spell her own name.”

Mary, with a mischievous smile replied, “Let us join my father, for I perceive Pompey has disappeared. The General will tell you, that Miss Betty Higginbottom need not trouble herself about the badness of her penmanship. While she possesses thirty bright thousands, she may find plenty of young men willing and happy to write for her.”

Henry declared that an ignorant woman was detestable at any time, and too horrible to

think of as a wife. Mary laughed most provokingly, and slyly observed, that whatever were his sentiments on that subject at the present moment, time would, perhaps, make an astonishing alteration in them, especially when he became acquainted with her amiable little friend in person.—Mordaunt vowed he had a great mind to quarrel with her.

“If you do,” cried Miss Belville gaily, “I will say such an unmerciful number of frightfully severe things, that you will be afraid to approach within an arm’s length of me for a month.”

“Suppose, my fair friend,” said Henry, “that I am also prepared with as long a list of ill-natured sayings to say to yourself?”

“Why,” then I will change my weapons, lay aside my tongue, and bring my hands into action.”

“ Indeed! And, pray, may I ask, my little hero in petticoats, in what way you intend to use them?”

“ To beat you when you affront me, and teach you to become a good obedient boy,” replied the giddy girl, as she bounded from his side, and flew into an open virandah behind her father’s chair. With a look of triumph she stood playing with some wild flowers she found there, casting every minute a half-scornful glance at her father’s ward, who knew not if he should be pleased or angry with his volatile companion.

She will only laugh at me if I appear offended with her childish nonsense, thought Henry; besides, my guardian might think me ridiculous if I were silly enough to appear vexed at his darling.

Thus did Mordaunt reason with himself,



striving to hide from his heart the real cause of his forbearance to the lovely being who had so early shewn an inclination to try her power over him. Determined not to feel a warmer sentiment than brotherly affection for the daughter of his guardian, young Mordaunt struggled to repress the growing tenderness he already felt for Mary. Short as had been their intimacy, Henry owned to himself that she possessed more of his admiration than any of her sex had yet obtained. She was exactly the being that a gay, generous disposition like his own could love with devoted fondness. Still Henry was aware, that the large fortune of Miss Belville placed her far beyond his reach; and he was too independent in his principles to strive to win the affections of a woman so situated.

As the ward of his revered guardian, he

might be regarded by Mary as a friend, or as a brother, since it was evidently the wish of the General that they should be as dear to each other, as if there existed the tie of relationship between them.

In his letters to his ward, General Belville had never forgotten to mention Mary with the warm praise of a parent, describing her playful innocence, her buoyant spirits, and unruffled temper, as qualities which, as they might one day add to his happiness, he must early learn to value. The old gentleman always concluded by assuring him, that the affectionate and tender heart of his child already longed to receive him as a brother.

Mary's reception, however, had chilled for a moment the ardour of his feelings: he had entered the house of his guardian prepared to regard with delight the rare being who

presided over it. With romantic enthusiasm, he fancied all that was lovely and fascinating in woman, graced the fairy form and features of the divinity described by the General.— Mary appeared, and the sudden chill of disappointment was visible on the bright and happy face of his ingenuous ward.

Had Mary continued the senseless inanimate creature she then looked, Henry would never have had occasion to dread an examination of his thoughts, at least when Miss Belville was the subject that engrossed them. But when Mary stood before him in her own bewitching innocently sportive character, he felt immediately convinced that to regard her with indifference was wholly impossible. How foolish it was of my dear guardian, thought Henry, sighing deeply, yet unconsciously, thus to teach me to love his daughter before I had

seen her. The sigh was echoed back so loudly, that Henry, who had forgotten he was not alone, started, and raising his eyes from the ground, the first object he beheld was Miss Belville standing close at his shoulder.

“ I was just thinking,” she said playfully, and yet evidently striving to be serious, “ that you must imagine me a very silly girl.” Mordaunt remained silent, and she continued: “ I know that I am a sad giddy mad-cap. My dear father is ever telling me that I suffer my folly to outstrip my wisdom much too often, and, indeed, I believe so too ; don’t you, Henry ?”

“ Yes,” was the short and laconic answer of young Mordaunt.

A transient blush tinged the fine features of Miss Belville as she said, “ we are not apt to be so careful of our words ; that is,

we do not fear that they will be wrongly, or unkindly taken, when we jest with those whom we have been *taught to love*."

Henry smiled at the peculiar stress laid on the last words; looking earnestly in the face of the speaker, he replied, "I doubt that my sweet sister has mistaken me for her father confessor, else she would not surely endeavour to convince *one* of her folly, who will ever have too partial an eye, while gazing on herself, to perceive that she can act otherwise than rightly."

"I am sorry for that, Henry," said Mary, thoughtfully; "a dear friend should have a quick eye, that he may see the imperfections of those made happy by his friendship, and correct them by gentle admonitions, and kind persuasion."

"You would not call that being your

friend, sweetest Mary, who was perpetually reminding you of your faults?" asked Mor-daunt.

"I would call no one my *friend* who could see me act in a way he secretly condemned, and yet to myself speak fair, and greet me with kind words, and still kinder smiles, as if I had deserved his approbation rather than his censure," replied Miss Belville. "I dare say, Henry," she continued, looking at him archly as she spoke, "that ere this, you have thought of some severe punishment for my levity."

Henry appeared confused, as he enquired what offence had been committed, that he should be suspected of meditating on its punishment; "besides," said he, laughing, "my sweet friend must be kind enough to first inform me who is the offender."

“ A woman’s ungovernable tongue,” cried Miss Belville.

Henry coloured, and remained silent. Mary laughed most provokingly. “ I will leave you until the dinner hour,” said she, “ and, perhaps, by that time Harry Mordaunt will be able to determine whether he ought to feel *offended* at the innocent jests of a spoiled giddy girl, or to overlook them with that gentle forbearance which we expect and hope to meet with from those we esteem, and which is also inseparable from true friendship. If you wish to learn where my father is,” she continued, “ you will find him half way to the village; perhaps you would like to join him, he does not walk very fast, and there is a much shorter way through the grounds than the one he has taken.”

Henry’s mind had been so wholly absorbed

by one fair object, that he now, for the first time, perceived that the General was absent, and, rising hastily, he prepared to follow him. Mary repeated to him over and over again each way he would have to turn before he could gain the high road, warning him to be careful how he steered the little boat across the water, and not to venture too near the over-hanging precipices he would have to pass, as the path became so narrow in one place as to render it dangerous to a person unaccustomed to the spot.

Mordaunt smiled affectionately on his kind counsellor, and promised to be guided by her directions. In her anxiety for his safety, Mary had discovered dangers she had never dreamed of before, when her own light figure bounded along the steep and uneven path she had been describing to Henry. Fear-



lessly did Miss Belville almost daily bend her steps to the next village, treading with a firm and steady foot across the rugged and hilly ground she now imagined so perilous to approach. Long did she watch the agile form of young Mordaunt as he rapidly ascended the opposite hills: "how light and graceful are his movements, how full of joyous happiness!" thought Mary. "Will that face ever be less sunny, less open, less sincere than it is now? Is the chill of disappointed hopes and blighted prospects doomed in after-years to cloud the unruffled calmness of that ingenuous brow?" A sigh escaped the bosom of the generous girl at the painful supposition. "He is poor," said she, thoughtfully, as she turned from the open window, "and what may not a proud independent spirit like his be fated to endure."

## CHAPTER III.

AMONG the many who experienced the benevolent kindness of the warm-hearted General, was an aged woman, to whom he had for many years evinced so much generosity, that the poor families who lived near her on the lone common, where her small white cottage was to be seen nearly covered with ivy, would frequently remark to each other, that it was a fine thing to have been a soldier's wife, when there was a general hard by who thought nothing too good for one that had followed

the camp. Certain it was, that old Margaret possessed more of the comforts of life than many of those around her. Margaret's husband had been a soldier, and the widow of a brave man was sure to find favour in the eyes of General Belville.

Walter Maynard, his steward, was requested to see that she never wanted for any thing. A neat little house was fitted up for her reception, and for fourteen years the old woman had been indebted to the humanity of the General for all that she possessed. Her gratitude was boundless; Mary and her father seemed necessary to her existence; without them the world would have been a blank, and the grateful heart of Margaret acknowledged in a hundred little nameless actions the intensity of her veneration and affection for her benefactor and his lovely child.

Mary, the adored and motherless infant of her revered general, who had sat for hours with her fair face resting on her aged bosom, was the beloved of her soul. What would have been the affliction of the old woman could she not have seen her daily, and have heard from her own sweet lips, that she was well and happy.

As the bosom friend and foster-sister of her idol, Cathleen Maynard possessed no small share of Margaret's love. Walter had ever *seemed* willing to bestow the good gifts of his master, and himself and daughter were not forgotten in the prayers of the widow. Both children had been in the habit of paying daily visits to the cottage of Margaret, both had for years called her by the endearing name of mother, and each of them felt that warm, that unchangeable affection for

the friend of their childhood, that time can never obliterate from the heart, while there remains one lingering thought of infancy's unclouded happy hours.

There was one trait in the character of Margaret which, as the graver Cathleen advanced to womanhood, gave her pain, and made her feel less free and cheerful in her presence. Margaret secretly professed to be a revealer of the secrets of futurity; she believed she inherited the *second-sight*! and Mary was delighted at the idea of gazing on the shadowy pages of the future. Henry the unknown, yet, nevertheless, dear Henry! how often did the giddy girl strain her bright eyes in vainly striving to discover his form in the magic glass of the mysterious Margaret! how often would the chill of disappointment blanch her blooming cheeks when

the old woman declared that she could distinguish, though Mary could not, his handsome features as plainly as if he stood before her; for in India she had added eastern superstitions to that of the north.

In vain did Cathleen reason with the volatile girl; Mary remained a true believer. And how could she do otherwise, when Margaret had actually seemed to have foretold many things which had come to pass? Could Cathleen Maynard have known how truly the aged widow had appeared to trace her fate in the clear and sparkling crystalline, her keen eye so loved to look upon—how in secret she had mourned over the dark page her art and experience could read, yet had no power to brighten—could she have heard the short restless sigh that broke from the lips of the strange woman whenever her own fair form

crossed the threshold of her door, as if some painful recollection was awakened in her mind as often as the beautiful face of the steward's daughter met her gaze—she would not, perhaps, have treated with such scornful derision what might at least have served as a timely warning to one so guileless and inexperienced as herself.

Margaret had not seen her beloved child since the arrival of young Mordaunt. The indisposition of Walter Maynard had likewise prevented Mary from walking as far as the common, and the widow, fearing that her darling would not be able to find an opportunity to pay her accustomed visit, had hobbled as far as the mansion of her benefactor, and, unseen by any of the domestics, had seated herself quietly in the dressing-room of her favourite, well knowing that it could

not be long before she would seek her apartments to dress for dinner.

The attendant of Miss Belville had procured her some refreshment, for Margaret was always favourably received by all the servants, as well from her good-nature, as her skill. The old woman sat contentedly enjoying her comfortable repast, delighted at the thought of having gained the private rooms of Mary without being discovered by the numerous dependants, who were ever curious to learn something of the future, when by chance they could catch a glimpse of her long red cloak any where near their master's dwelling.

"That is the light step of my darling," cried Margaret. "She is coming to cheer the old woman's heart with her sweet smile, and merry laugh."



"It is, indeed, my young lady," replied Sarah, as Miss Belville entered.

"None of those dresses you have selected please me," said Mary, as she cast a hasty glance at the gay coloured silks her maid now invited her to choose from. "I will have none of them, Sarah," she continued, "I pray you put them all away."

The girl replaced them in the wardrobe, and Mary flung herself on a seat without perceiving Margaret, who had retired to the other end of the apartment. Mary raised her eyes to the face of Sarah, who stood wondering at the disinclination her mistress had shewn to attire herself in the dresses she had often heard her so much admire.

"What *shall* I wear?" enquired Miss Belville. "Indeed, Sarah, I am more difficult to please than ever."

“No wonder, darling!” replied the well-known voice of Margaret; “you have more eyes to please now than your own. Time was when my sweet child thought little of the colour of her robe; but now, I warrant me, Sarah will have a tedious life with thee, as if the brave youth needed to look on thy attire for brilliant hues, when he can see the rose and lily on thy own fair cheeks, and heaven’s sweetest blue shaded by the dark lashes of thine eyes.”

“Mother, dear mother!” exclaimed Mary, throwing her arms affectionately around her, “how glad I am to see you here. He is come, dear mother! and he is every thing that my father described him.”

“I know it, darling! Did I not tell thee he would be all thy young heart could desire?” replied Margaret, as she pressed the

cheek of the blushing girl with parental fondness. "Thou wilt be happy, lady-bird," she continued, as she parted with her withered hand the glossy curls that clustered round the smooth forehead of Mary, who rested on her knee, with her arms still clasped around her neck, as if she feared to lose a word that fell from the lips of her aged counsellor.

For a moment the old woman gazed on her in silence, the cheering smile had passed from her weather-beaten countenance, and her look became grave and troubled.

"These eyes are growing weak," she said, holding her handkerchief before them to conceal the tears that alone occasioned their dimness.

"Dear mother, have I caused this sudden depression of spirits?" asked Mary kindly,

as she perceived that Margaret was struggling to hide her weakness from observation.

The old woman looked at her with pride and admiration. "The path marked out for thee to tread, beloved child, is smooth and sunny as thy own blissful temper," she replied.

Mary looked earnestly upon her expressive features. Margaret raised her gently from her knee, saying, with a deep sigh, "It is the thought of one far less fortunate than thou art, my darling, that often brings a tear into these foolish old eyes. I know it is vain to regret evils that we cannot escape from, that we cannot even by our prayers avert from those most dear to us, or prevent them even for a time from falling like a thunder-bolt on the unconscious victim, who slumbers in fancied security."

Again Mary gazed enquiringly on the pale and care-worn countenance of Margaret; she felt convinced that there was some secret which the early friend of her childhood wished, yet feared, to impart to her. It could be nothing respecting herself; to whom then could it relate? Surely Cathleen was not the person to whom Margaret alluded, when she spoke of evils that nothing could avert, thought Mary; yet that there was a mystery, a something to be concealed, even from herself by Cathleen, she had long been assured of. The companion of her youth evidently shunned enquiry: she was no longer the gay, open, sincere being beloved by all around her. A constant melancholy had chased from the fair and polished brow the exquisite smile that once was the admiration of all who gazed on the perfect face

of Walter Maynard's only child. Mary felt that time had either rendered her less dear to her foster-sister, or that a painful dread of incurring her displeasure, and, perhaps, losing her affection, had made Cathleen set a seal upon her lips, and obstinately refuse to give any clue to the source of her uneasiness.

Margaret stood gazing on the little path that led to the village, purposely concealing her features from the searching glance of her bewildered darling, who remained motionless at her toilet, while her trembling hands seemed unable to assist in the now arduous task of adorning her lovely person. Sarah had been despatched to the old woman's cottage with a basket of the choicest fruit and other delicacies, her mistress not thinking it prudent to converse with one, from

whom she had no concealments, before a thoughtless and talkative attendant. With a heavy heart she took her seat before the glass, that reflected the pale and no longer laughing face of its agitated mistress. Listless and uneasy, she felt no wish, no power to braid the luxuriant tresses that fell upon her neck and shoulders; her flowers and ornaments lay scattered before her, and the simple dress of white lustring she had selected from among the many displayed by Sarah, hung neglected by her side.

A sudden exclamation from Margaret, who still rested her arm upon the window seat, supporting her head with her long bony fingers, made Mary spring in an instant to her chair. The old woman noticed not her approach; looking intently on the object that had attracted her observation, she continued

talking in a low voice, as if unconscious of the presence of any other person.

“It is a fine, a bonny face!” she said, scarcely speaking above a whisper. “There is a noble bearing in the youth not much unlike the father, but the step of the son is light and buoyant; it wants the thoughtful measured tread, that time and deep anxiety produces, to render it like the parent’s.”

Mary bent almost breathless over the shoulder of the speaker, fearing to lose a word. For a moment Margaret was silent. “I should have known him,” she continued, “among a hundred. I cannot be deceived, though years have elapsed since I beheld him; it is the only son of one of the bravest, one of the best of men who now approaches.”

Speechless with astonishment, Miss Belville stood silently watching the dignified and



graceful figure of Henry, as he walked by the side of her father, who was cautiously descending the opposite hills, assisted by his kindly attentive ward, who eagerly stretched forth his hand to prevent him from slipping off the rugged and uneven ground they had to walk over before they could reach the boat.

“Thou hast thy father’s warm and affectionate heart,” cried Margaret, who was closely observing his attentions to the General. “Well, well,” she continued, “the only legacy a brave man had to leave his orphan child was his many virtues. With those, shouldst thou truly inherit them, young Harry Mordaunt, a greater treasure may be within thy reach than the glittering idol of the miser, or a titled name could purchase.”

Henry and the General had now crossed

the stream, and reached the little gate that opened into the shrubbery. Margaret rose hurriedly from her seat, and taking the passive hand of the wondering Mary, she led her back to her toilet.

“Haste thee, my own darling,” she said; “there is one already listening for the sound of that light foot upon the staircase; let him not wait, lady-bird; he is a jewel many a noble dame would be glad to wear.”

“Prithee, cease thy nonsense, dearest mother,” exclaimed Miss Belville, while she hastily confined the bright tresses of her chesnut hair with a wreath of myrtle blossoms; “you talk of Harry Mordaunt as if he was my lover,” and a deep blush suffused her downy cheek at the supposition.

“I talk to thee of *him*, because I know thy throbbing heart, spite of thy childish

coyness, will never own another master," replied Margaret. "Thou art attired like a bride to meet him, my fair child," she said, as she fastened the rich blond that fell over her graceful arm with a valuable pearl ornament; "thou shalt be wooed, and won, and wedded, before another year is added to thy age, and the crazy old woman, that has held thee in her arms, and nestled thee in her bosom, when thou couldst scarcely reach her knee, will whisper in thine ear as she fastens on thy bridal wreath, the prediction of Margaret Stanley is now verified. A dark fate forbade the union of the parents, but a kinder one now smiles on that of their children."

"Oh, mother! dear mother!" was all that Mary could articulate, as she covered her face with her hand, vainly endeavouring to conceal the blushes that seemed to chase

each other over the beaming happy features which no longer wore the air of sadness.

“Thou wilt find the old woman’s words come true,” continued Margaret, preparing to depart. “I would not feed thee with an idle tale, dear girl, that after-hours would sadly teach thee thou shouldst ne’er have listened to; I would not see thee shed a tear,” and she pressed her lips to the forehead of Mary, “that I could by any sacrifice prevent, much less would I mislead thee, child of my boundless love.”

“Dearest mother,” cried Miss Belville, “I am too well convinced of your affection, to imagine for an instant that you would say any thing purposely to deceive me; yet surely, my own kind Margaret, you are mistaken when you affirm that I shall be the wife of Henry Mordaunt? My father has

enjoined us to love each other as brother and sister, and I already feel so much at home in his society, from being early taught to consider him in that tender light, that I should almost be tempted to regret any change in his sentiments towards me."

"Doubtless, my darling, you are right," replied Margaret: "yet time will shew if General Belville's fair daughter has no wish to inspire a warmer feeling in the breast of her father's ward than brotherly affection."

"I will see you again to-morrow, dear mother," said Mary, as she assisted her to descend the stairs, without appearing to notice the last speech of the old woman.

"Bless thee, my sweet child!" cried Margaret fervently. "I think I could not live long without seeing thee; thou art the pride

of my aged heart, the support of my declining years."

Mary tenderly besought her to be careful, and not to fatigue herself, reminding her that she could rest by the way at Walter Maynard's house.

"Not to-day, love, not to-day," said Margaret. "Now that I have ventured so far from home, I will call and see how poor Kitty Enfield bears the troubles that have come upon her."

Miss Belville enquired what had befallen the widow.

"The worst of all human evils," cried Margaret; "she has lived to see the prop of her declining years wither like a broken reed. She has tarried long enough in this world to behold a beloved daughter's shame—poor soul! I fear me she is in much need

of comfort; no one can judge of what a mother feels when she follows a dear child to its last home, but those who have had bairns of their own. That is a trial hard, very hard, to bear, to lay them in the cold grave with the dreadful truth engraven on one's heart, that we can never behold again in this world what a few short hours before looked so brightly beautiful, so gay, and happy, that the thought of separation but for a day would have caused a momentary check to the fond parent's happiness. I have known and felt all this," said Margaret, raising her streaming eyes to the face of Mary: "I have beheld a blooming infant smiling at my breast at sunrise, and before the close of day it lay a stiffened inanimate corpse upon my knee. So far I can judge of all that a mother endures and struggles through,

when the hand of death deprives her of her heart's dearest treasure; but the sufferings of Kitty Enfield are still greater than any I have described. Could we but hear the now lone and desolate woman give vent to her frenzied agony, doubtless we should find that the pangs of those who mourn over the dead are light and trivial when compared to the withering, ceaseless torture of the mind, felt by the wretched and degraded parent, who adds perhaps to her bitter cup the anguish of self-reproach, upbraiding herself with the ruin of a young and spotless soul."

"Dreadful!" murmured Miss Belville; "too dreadful surely for reality."

"Poor Susan!" said Margaret, as she kissed off the trickling tears that moistened the cheek of her young companion. "She



was ever a giddy reckless creature, one that would never listen to the advice of those who wished her well. I always felt a dread that something would happen to her. Well, well, I will hobble as far as the village at any rate, for poor Kitty will be glad to see the face of an old friend in the hour of adversity. Fare thee well, my darling, and thank thee for thy kindness."

Mary closed the gate after the old woman, and, with a heavy heart, returned to the house.

## CHAPTER IV.

At a slow pace Margaret proceeded along the road, pausing every minute to look back on the beautiful villa belonging to her benefactor, and fancying that the white dress of his child was still to be seen through the thick foliage of the trees which surrounded it.

“She is not yet gone,” cried Margaret, as she stretched her eyes to catch, if possible, another glimpse of her graceful figure. “My darling is still watching the fond old woman, and letting the brave youth bide by

himself, who would give the world to be so watched, so gazed on, though I much fear his pride will keep too strict a guard upon his tongue to let him tell my simple child so much."

"Good morrow to you, Margaret," said a female voice from the other side of the hedge, "I hope you are well; if I can only get across this ditch, I will come and help you along, for I see you are sadly tired. Come here, you little black cherry," continued the speaker, "and jump over first, and then you can pull me after."

"Ah, misse," said Pompey, for it was he the kind voice was addressing; "Pompey fear much; Pompey no like to tumble in dirty ditch."

"Have a care, love," cried Margaret, "you may tear your dress if you venture through that hedge. I shall do very well, thank you."

" Bless your old heart," exclaimed Miss Betty Higginbottom, " never mind my frock, I have but one-half of it to tear, I left the other sticking in a bramble-bush in the next field ; and it does not matter much, for my petticoat is quite clean."

" So it is, misse," said the black ; " but ditch would soon make black, like Pompey."

" Get out of the way, you chicken-heart !" replied Betty, " I can see you are afraid to venture. There now, ar'n't you ashamed of yourself to let me jump first?"

" Pompey know him place too well," muttered the negro, who still felt a disinclination to trust himself so near the muddy water. " Pompey like good example, so him always *follow* lily-white misse."

Betty declared he was a timid blockhead, and threatened to leave him behind. Mar-

garet rested herself contentedly on the green bank opposite to them, amused by watching the countenance of the boy that was changing every instant from the ludicrous to the sorrowful. Betty coaxed and scolded; one moment she was convulsed with laughter, and the next she was pelting him with handfuls of grass and gravel. Her own garments were so completely torn and disordered, it would have been impossible for any thing to have added to the strangeness of her appearance; and Pompey, when he cast a glance at his spotless trowsers, and highly polished boots, could not avoid thinking they looked better, infinitely better, than his young mistress's now dingy petticoats. Disconcerted at the unmerciful jeers of Betty, and perceiving that he stood a chance of becoming quite as bad by remaining within reach of her mis-

siles, he advanced to the opening, saying, in a tone of suppressed anger, "me no like to have dirty stones thrown at me: Pompey love clean things, him angry when his nice white clothes made like poor ploughboy's." Closing his eyes, as if to shut out all recollection of the dangers he had to encounter, he rushed across, and fell at the feet of Betty, who wiped off the dust her own mischief had caused on his dress, as good-naturedly as if nothing had happened to discompose her.

Pompey stood patiently enduring the operation of cleansing his bespattered attire, which was partly recovering its look of original purity, by the aid of a little water, and the remaining half of the young lady's frock.

"Come along, Margaret," exclaimed Betty,

passing the old woman's arm through her own; "I'm sure it's a shame to have kept you waiting so long, but 'tis all Pompey's fault, so it is. But I shall catch it above a bit when I get home. Just look at what's left of my frock;" and she hastily rolled up the remnant, and concealed it under her arm.

Margaret chided her kindly, and reminded her that it was a sad thing for a young lady, like herself, to be seen going through the village such a figure.

Betty laughed heartily. "Laws, Margaret," she said, "how can you talk such stuff? "Do you take me for a fool, that you think I want to be a fine lady? Father says it's quite enough to have one in the family; and you would say so too, if you could only see sister Nancy come down to breakfast of a morning. Why, she's as much stiff muslin

and fine lace about her as would dress my big doll for six years to come! and do you know, father says if it wasn't for her face, he could not tell her shoulders from her head."

"Ah, ha!" cried Pompey, rubbing his hands with delight, "Misse Nancy look like red cabbage when it pop its head out of snow bed in winter."

The trio had now reached the turning that led to Higginbottom Hall. Betty begged and prayed that Margaret would stop and refresh herself, promising to take her safe home in the evening. The old woman warmly thanked the kind-hearted girl, assuring her that she would come to the hall very soon and spend the whole day with her, excusing herself that morning as she had a duty to perform which would lead her to the village. Betty was ob-



liged to rest contented with the promise of seeing her again shortly; and Margaret, wishing them good-bye, hobbled forward to the cottage of Kitty Enfield.

“ Good heavens, ma’ !” exclaimed Miss Higginbottom, who was standing at the drawing-room window watching the approach of her sister and her dark favourite, “ what a fright Elizabeth has made of herself.”

“ No doubt,” said Mrs. Higginbottom, as she joined her eldest daughter. “ I’ll be bound she has been bird’s-nesting with that odious nigger page, and torn every thing off her back. Is it not *harritating*, my dear Nancy, that we cannot *incense* her of the *impropriety* of conducting herself like a lady ? It’s all your father’s doings; he ought to teach her the *endecency* of such behaviour.”

“ My dear vife,” replied her husband, start-

ing up from a comfortable nap, " what signifies your frustrating yourself in this here manner,—it's quite ridiculous, Mrs. H. From morning till night there's not a bit of peace in this here house, because you likes to be always blowing up about our Betty and *that ere* negro, or page, as Miss Nancy calls him!" —The party knew no difference between an Indian and a negro.

" Mr. Higginbottom, you are a most abominable ill-bred man. You doesn't know common purliteness, sir," retorted the incensed wife.

" Come, that's precious imperent howsoever," muttered the little man, turning uneasily on his seat. " I'll be blowed if I takes that. I tell you what, Mrs. H." he cried, leaning back in his chair, and stretching his legs out to their full length, as if to assure

his auditors of his perfect independence,—  
“ I don’t like this here treatment at all of yours; don’t think to come over me with your fine flim-flams and book larning, ’cause as how I sha’n’t stand it. I shall be my own master, and Betty shall do as she likes.”

“ Why, I’m perfectly *analised* and *compounded* with your barbarity,” shrieked his enraged partner. “ Oh, my dear Nancy! your father’s treatment is most *inflammable* and *ungraceful*,” she continued, as she kept fanning with her handkerchief a face passion had nearly deepened to the same shade as her crimson turban.

“ There you go, vife, I must not open my lips but what you must be swooning away in an instant,” said Mr. Higginbottom. “ Bless your heart, love, I didn’t mean to vex you; I only want you to keep quiet and easy. You

will make such a botherum about Betty not taking the polish, and you know, my dear wife, I've told you many a score times, it's no use in the world trying to make a silken purse out of a sow's ear. Think of that ere old proverb, my dear."

"I don't want to larn *destruction* from your stupid old prologues, sir," sobbed Mrs. Higginbottom; "I've *indiscretion* enough myself to *extinguish* what is right without your having the atrocity to teach me."

"La, pa, you're such an ignorant man," ejaculated the languishing Nancy; "I do believe you talk in that foolish way only to vex ma."

"I sha'n't stand any of your nonsense, miss Nancy, if you are the lady of the family," replied her father sharply; "your behaviour is no great shakes, though mother

and I did pay the matter of twenty pounds a-year for your broughtage up, and I can't tell how much every quarter for manners."

Without condescending to notice the words of her father, Nancy continued caressing a French dog that lay on her knee, and swinging her delicate foot in the air, that was forced into a small black satin slipper, evidently for the purpose of admiring it herself. The old man observed the movements of his daughter for a long time in silence, at last he exclaimed, in a tone of astonishment, "why, bless my heart and soul, Nancy, you must be in a complete fever! why I declare if your legs ar'n't as red as your mother's face."

"Gracious, pa!" said Nancy, tossing her head disdainfully, "why you grow more ignorant every day; can't you see my silk

stockings have been tinged with a pink saucer?"

"Well, I declare that was a funny blunder of mine," replied the delighted and astonished father; "ecod, that's the funniest thing I've heard for a long time; but I say, Nancy, why don't you dye them ere white cheeks of yours a bit? Why, when I married your mother, her face was as blooming as a full-blown rose, but I can't say exactly that she had red legs."

"Don't talk like a fool, my dear Higginbottom," said his wife, who had recovered her good-humour the moment her husband's compliment upon her complexion reached her ear; "you know very well, my love," she continued, "that when you and I came together, we had something else to do than study fashions."

“ Very true, my dear wife,” observed Mr. Higginbottom, reaching his hat and cane ; “ and now, my love, you and I will go and take a turn in the garden. By-the-bye, my dear Mrs. H.,” passing her arm with an air of gallantry through his own, as he led her down stairs, “ there is some of the finest vete heart cabbages I ever saw. Bless me, wife, I’m sure you never brought as fine ones at this time of the season, the whole sixteen years we stood in——”

“ Will you never forget that abominable market, Mr. H.?” enquired his wife, in a mournful tone.

“ It is so natural for a man to look back, my love, with pleasure to the happiest years of his life,” he replied ; “ and I’m sure, my dear wife, we turned many an honest penny in that snug little shop of ours. There’s

many a time I sit twirling my thumbs in that great drawing-room at the hall, and I think to myself, oh that I was sitting up to my knees among oranges and apples, tying up posies for Betty to sell to the fine gentlefolks. Ah, my dear wife, there's nothing that we can have here, that will ever be a patch on them ere good old times."

"Well, my dear husband, you must have a strange taste to prefer a dirty greengrocer's shop to a splendid house, like the hall," replied his wife; "you ought to have more pride, my dear John, than to think of such things, now you are made a fine gentleman. I'm sure there's General Belville treats you with as much *fallability* as if you had been a great man all your life; and as for Nancy, why I'm sure she is an object of *distraction* wherever she goes. Didn't 'Squire Maitland



pay the greatest *intention* to her at the ball last week, and when they all stood up to waltz, he, in the most purlite way, *inspected* her for his partner."

"All that is very true, my dear Molly, but there is one thing," said her husband, "that lays very heavy on my heart. You see, my love, you and I never had a fall out in our lives until we got this confounded bit of money, and you know, my dear vife, it is a hard thing, after living together for more than twenty years in the most hamicable and peaceful manner, to be falling out in this here indecent and unfortunate way, all about a little dirty good-breeding, that will make a man neither the richer or the poorer, or help him to feel a bit more secure of obtaining mercy when death shall summon him from this here troublesome world, to give

an account of himself in the presence of his Maker."

"Well, well," cried Mrs. Higginbottom wiping away the tear that was visible on her sun-burnt cheek, "as you say, my dear John, it is a foolish thing for old folks like you and me to quarrel and vex one another about such stupid trifles. If you would only, my dear husband, just for the sake of the children," she continued, in a persuasive tone, "try and be a little more *perticuler* before these great people; only think, my love, how you *deposed* yourself at the *pick-a-ninny* dinner we had last week with the General and his party."

Ah! ha! my dear wife, that was a sad slip of mine," replied Mr. Higginbottom, chuckling to himself. "The General was pressing you to take wine with him arter dinner, and

you would not, and you see, my love, I thought as how he might feel a little queer at your refusing him, and so, by way of apology, I said you didn't like them ere strong liquors, but if he warn't particular, I was sure you would pledge him in a glass of juniper, for I had always made you, since we had been man and wife, take a drop afore you went to market, to keep cold out. Nancy turned as vite as a head of endive, and Miss Mary tittered and blushed, and looked at her father; but he, good man, was too wise to laugh at what he knew before, and so arter all it passed off very well."

Mrs. Higginbottom shook her head mournfully, and they walked on in silence. Finding that it was impossible to make her husband forget his former occupations, she resolved, for the future, that he should enjoy himself

his own way. One of the kindest hearted creatures himself, he could not bear to see any person compelled to act contrary to their own inclinations. Thus, for the sake of his youngest daughter, he had exerted his spirit, and exercised more authority over his wife for the last twelve months than he had been known to do during the whole time they had been married.

Betty had been accustomed, from a baby, to accompany her mother to the market, and as soon as her little tongue could lisp out a sufficient number of intelligible words, she was taught to extol the various fruits and vegetables her parents offered for sale. She was the idol of her father, and the general favourite of all who visited the shop, as well for her beauty as the persuasive manner she had of tempting the purchaser to buy.

When she had reached the age of ten years, her parents made her a present of a well stocked stand in the market, out of the future profits of which she was to provide for her own wants. This was the summit of Betty Higginbottom's ambition. She was independent of every body, and she could now relieve the distresses of others. The profit of many a nosegay was given by the benevolent child to a passing beggar. Not a flower, nor a single basket of fruit had Betty to carry home when her daily labours were ended. Her stand was continually surrounded by juvenile customers of the other sex, who would not have worn a moss-rose bud that had not been selected from Betty's basket, and divested of the thorns by her own fair and dimpled fingers, for the world.

In any quarrel or dispute that arose among

the market-sellers of her own age, her voice was sure to be the loudest, for she was the general redresser of all grievances. Betty never stood upon ceremony ; and if the eloquence of her tongue failed to restore peace and order, the culprit was singled out, and her delicate little hands inflicted the deserved castigation, amidst the shouts and plaudits of her young companions. The fond father was delighted with the success of his child ; and deaf to the gentle reproof of his wife, he would often steal away from the shop to take a peep at the happy laughing face of his little girl vending her fruit and nosegays.

John Higginbottom had been a quiet, sober, industrious man all his life. Left an orphan when a boy, he had been obliged to struggle hard for an honest subsistence. His only brother had been more fortunate ; almost

immediately after the death of their father, he was taken abroad by a gentleman possessed of immense property in the Indies, and John had never heard of him from that day but once, and that entirely from chance. Happening to meet with the mate of a vessel that had just returned home, he mentioned the circumstance to him, and was informed by the man that his brother was so beloved by the person who had taken charge of him for his dutiful and good behaviour, that it was generally thought he would inherit all the immense fortune of his patron, who was a widower without children.

This news gave great satisfaction to the honest and simple-minded brother, who felt perfectly contented and happy with the humble station in life Providence had allotted him, never for a moment wishing or even

hoping to benefit by the superior good-fortune of his absent' relative. He blessed God that had in his mercy provided for *him*, who was once friendless and destitute like himself, with the means of holding a respectable station in society.

Years passed away, and Higginbottom became a husband and a father. Fortunate in all that he undertook, he soon amassed sufficient to keep his family above the reach of penury. Nothing was wanting to complete his happiness, could he have heard occasionally of William. All enquiries however proved fruitless, and the worthy soul gave up the hope he had cherished from year to year, and often sighed in secret over his fraternal disappointment.

It was at the close of a fine summer's day that a stranger was seen attentively observing



the name that was painted in large letters over the shop-door of the fruiterer. He was a tall, thin, unhealthy-looking man, his complexion more the sallow tinge that ever indicates ill-health or a long residence in a hot climate, and the look of age seemed to have crept in, and banished the robust and hearty appearance that should have belonged to one in middle-life. After passing and repassing the house several times, he entered, and selected some of the finest fruit, which he desired might be sent to the hotel where he was residing. He then began a conversation with old Higginbottom, who had laid down his pipe and handed him a seat; a group of children were playing round the door, and the stranger enquired if they were his. John replied in the negative, observing that he had but two, and they were brought

up to work for their living, and had something else to do than idle in the streets.

The stranger raised his dark eyes to the face of the speaker. "Perhaps," he said, "they are boys, if so employment is easily obtained for them. Are they young, or have they passed the age of childhood?"

Before the father could reply Nancy entered. "That is my eldest daughter, sir," cried Higginbottom. The stranger cast a scrutinizing glance at the pretty delicate figure of the girl, as she passed him and quickly vanished into the small sitting-room behind the shop.

"A shewy looking young woman," he observed thoughtfully, "and I dare say you are very proud of her, hey, my friend?"

The father again laid down his pipe and rested his arms upon the counter.—"You see,

sir," said he in a low voice, " my wife, God bless her for a good soul, has some queer notions in her head at times, and nothing would do, when our Nancy came from school, for the mother, but she must go and larn dress-making, 'cause as how she were a little genteeler than us. And so you see, your honour, that gives her that ere smart look; but 'tis a trade I doesn't like, and I often tells my wife 'tis that makes Nancy's cheeks as vite as a turnip."

" But you have another?" cried the stranger, who could scarcely repress a smile at the simple manners of his companion.

" Yes, sir, I have one more, and a bonny lass it is!" replied Higginbottom with a look of exulting pride, that soon convinced his attentive listener that the one he had yet to see was the father's favourite.

“ If your honour could only get a look at our Betty, you would think as every body thinks, that there ar’n’t such another in these here parts.

“ Indeed,” said the stranger; “ I own that I should like much to see her. I suppose she is not at home?”

“ Betty will not be home this hour or two,” replied her father; “ she never stirs from the market while there’s a chance of getting a customer. Vife and I set her up with a stand of her own, and mighty proud she is of it, and a deal of money she makes; but, bless you, sir, she gives it half away, or may-be more. Betty is never so happy as when she is helping others. I’ve known her give away her own dinner many a time, when she was a bit of a thing at home, and mother kept her short of money.”

The countenance of the stranger no longer wore that look of chilling coldness that had made him appear unsocial and reserved to the honest fruiterer, notwithstanding his willingness to talk to one he had never seen before. Rising slowly from his seat, he laid his hand upon the shoulder of the father, saying, "The blessing of God will follow that beloved child, and guide her steps in safety o'er the steep and rugged path of life. She shall have riches and honours heaped upon her, that her willing hand, when it is stretched forth to obey the impulse of her benign and gracious nature, may be able to bestow its gifts freely, without the bitter check that poverty gives to bounty which would be boundless, could the means keep pace with the wishes of the giver."

Higginbottom could not rightly understand what means was to work this good for his dar-

ling child. Touching his hat respectfully to the speaker, he hoped he wouldn't think he was making too free, but if his honour would walk into his little parlour, he could shew him Betty's likeness, which had been admired by many, and had cost him a matter of five pounds. The stranger followed the father in silence, who took down the picture, and wiped it carefully with his apron before he delivered it into the extended hands of his new acquaintance.

“ It is a form worthy the precious jewel it enshrines,” said the stranger, surveying it with evident admiration; “ for what an inestimable jewel must that heart be: warm, pure, and capable of all that's good and great, throbbing with exquisite delight at administering to the happiness of others! Too young to be corrupted by the base flattery and dark hypo-

crisy of a deceitful world, or for one evil thought to cast even a transient shade over its dazzling and unsullied purity. I should know that heavenly face again were I to meet it among hundreds," he said, returning the picture to the delighted and gratified parent; "it is one we see not every day, for it is the index of a good and upright mind."

Before the astonished and bewildered father could reply, the stranger had quitted the shop, and was proceeding with hasty strides towards the market. Higginbottom reseated himself behind the counter, never for a moment imagining that the great gentleman who had so kindly admired and applauded the conduct of his youngest daughter, was that dear and lamented orphan brother, whose long absence from his native land he had never ceased to regret.

William Higginbottom had been reared in the lap of affluence; far different had been his education and style of living to that of his illiterate brother John. Heir to the immense wealth of his benefactor, a single man, without one relation near to soothe and comfort him, his lonely hours passed principally in a sick room, so completely had the climate destroyed his constitution. His thoughts often wandered to his own country, and he at length determined upon re-visiting it before he died, and endeavour to discover the residence of his long-forgotten brother. He knew that it was very improbable that fortune should have been as lavish of her gifts to both of them, and the ignorant and low-bred man he must expect to find in John, could never, he was convinced, be tolerated as a companion for himself. Still he might have children, and



one might be young enough to be taught to forget its humble acquaintances, and acquire by education and polished society, that elegance of manners his pride and long intercourse with the wealthy and worldly-minded, made him deem indispensable in the being whom he should openly acknowledge as his adopted child.

With all his failings, William Higginbottom had a heart that was ever alive to the sufferings of the wretched, and a hand that was never closed against the needy who implored his assistance. His greatest, perhaps his only fault, was pride. The idol of the desolate widower, who had no other creature on whom he could lavish his unbounded affection, he naturally imbibed all his principles and opinions, and the petted boy grew up to manhood, with the same ideas, tastes and feelings as his benefactor.

A complete horror of every thing that was not as refined and enlightened as himself and his protector, was the first and earliest lesson instilled into the youthful mind of William; a rooted aversion to vulgarity and impertinent familiarity, grew with his growth: it was, therefore, no wonder that when he again beheld his brother, he should conceal his name and near relationship from one whom, in a moment, he quickly discovered could never be the cheering and intellectual companion he sighed for in his hour of lonely seclusion.

A feeling of disgust took possession of his breast, when he first beheld the insignificant and vulgar figure of his nearest relative; the refined and highly cultivated mind shrank from holding communion with a man, who could not even feel the superiority that talent and polished manners must ever possess over

ignorance and folly. Far different were his feelings, while listening to the fond father's description of his favourite child. A thrill of rapture warmed his heart, and long before the voice of his brother had ceased, he had formed the resolution of adopting one who would delight, as he had done, in making the gift of a merciful Providence, a blessing to all who stood in need of succour and assistance.

She may be ignorant, thought William Higginbottom, as he hurried from the house of his brother, but she is a true Christian; in her hands money will possess its real value: at any rate I will see her, and judge for myself; she may be less vulgar than my fears lead me to pourtray. Beautiful in person, her want of education will not, at least for a time, be so noticed by the few to whom I shall be forced to introduce her.

The anxious relative had no sooner entered the market, than his attention was called to a crowd that had gathered round an unfortunate little black girl, who, apparently, had been gathering together the decayed fruit and vegetables, which had been cast from the different stands as no longer saleable. The lads had been pelting and jeering the wretched being, who had sought shelter from their rancour among the numerous baskets which lay heaped on one another.

William pressed forward to chide them for their wanton cruelty, but his steps were arrested by the sweet voice of a poor, but beautiful fair girl, who mounting on one of the forms, dared the rabble to approach the spot where the child lay concealed. In a moment the quick glance of the uncle recognised the small and lovely countenance of his

niece. An almost unearthly expression for a moment lighted up her features, as she gazed wildly and half fearfully upon the noisy and brutal scene before her. The little hand was stretched forward, as if in supplication above the heads of the vulgar herd who stood with open mouths, as waiting for the just reproof they expected to receive from the breathless and agitated girl. Her light and childish form was clad in a coarse petticoat of brown stuff, sufficiently short to display the symmetry of her leg and delicately turned ancle. A clean white bedgown and close muslin cap that confined her bright and glossy hair, completed her simple dress. Nature's gifts were perfect ones, and to them alone was Betty indebted for the kind and friendly feelings her appearance excited in the bosom of every beholder.

Finding that she remained silent, some of the boldest of the boys threatened to drag the little negress from her hiding-place, and beat her soundly for her impudence. "She is nothing but a lazy beggar," exclaimed one, laying hold of her roughly, and shaking the terrified child, who screamed aloud for help. Betty was in the centre of the crowd in an instant.

"Shame on you!" cried the indignant girl; "you have each of you got good parents to take care of you, and can you find it in your hearts to ill-use a poor lonely orphan, who has no one to give her bread when she is hungry? Go back to your stands, you unfeeling wretches!" she continued, raising her little form to its utmost height, and looking contemptuously upon the motley group, who were already beginning to feel abashed. "Go

back, and seek some better use of your time, for God will never bless wicked people who raise their hand against a poor child, black or white, who has no father or mother to take its part !”

“ But God will bless *thee*, thou best of children,” exclaimed a voice from among the crowd. “ That speech, so full of blessed mercy and humanity, shall make thee the mistress of countless wealth.”

“ It is a pity but what it could,” said a grey-headed old man, as he leaned, half double, on his stick, by the side of the uncle, who, unable to restrain his admiration, had uttered the exclamation ; “ Mary Higginbottom wants only the means,” continued the old man, “ the wish to do good never forsakes her.”

With the look of an angel, Betty turned

to the weeping negro child; placing her kindly on her own seat, she threw her arm around her neck, while she wiped off the streaming tears as they fell upon her melancholy face. "Never heed them, Blacky," she whispered softly in her ear, "they shall not hurt thee while I am here. I'll tell father if he comes, and he shall thrash those cruel boys; he can do it better than me."

It was a delightful scene for the uncle to witness. He stood in the centre of the crowd, with his arms folded across his breast, unable to withdraw his eyes from the spot where the benevolent and beautiful child of his brother remained, with the head of the little beggar resting on her bosom. Long did she soothe and encourage the wretched mendicant; all the halfpence were emptied out of her own



pocket, and safely deposited in that of the black's.

"Poor Sutta no like to beg," sobbed the child; "if good people would give her work, Sutta try hard to do it well, like white girl."

"You shall not beg any more, Sutta," said Betty, as she led her through the crowd towards the street; "I will buy you a basket to-morrow, and you shall have plenty of things to sell, and those wicked children won't dare to call you an idle beggar."

"What are you going to do with that little negress, my pretty maid?" inquired her uncle, as they pressed close to where he was standing.

"I'm going to take her out of harm's way, please your honour," said Betty, dropping as low a curtsy as if she had been offering one of her best nosegays for sale.

An encouraging smile was visible on the

pallid features of her interrogator ; and Betty, who had been early taught never to let an opportunity pass by neglected, was determined that Sutta should be the gainer, if possible, of at least as much as would supply her wants for the day, before she parted from the stranger. Taking her by the hand, and placing her where she imagined her helpless and forlorn appearance would be seen to advantage, she began her story. Sutta's misfortunes and disasters were all severally enumerated, and most bitter and degrading did the eloquence of her young advocate make her desolate situation appear. Pausing now and then to discover what impression her simple tale had made on the mind of her auditor, she continued to plead the cause of the beggar, with an eagerness unchecked by the silence of the stranger, yet almost fearing,

without having received one word of sympathy, to ask for the assistance she so much wished to obtain.

The heart of the uncle was too full to allow him to make the hoped-for reply. His eyes were riveted on the features of his adopted child, as she used every persuasive argument in favour of the black. It was easy to discover that Betty was in the habit of talking for her livelihood, and winning the idle loungers to her tempting stall by the flippancy of her witty tongue. With a look of earnest entreaty she fixed her bright eyes on the face of her uncle, as she folded her snowy arms quietly on her breast, and ceased speaking.

The stranger deliberately put his hand in his pocket, and drew from it a purse, saying, as he placed it in her hand, "With the con-

tents of this, my sweet child, you will be able to lighten the troubles of a few aching hearts, and by so doing, gratify your own."

A cry of pleasure burst from the lips of Betty as she received the treasure. Her uncle waited not for her reply: kissing her fondly, while tears of rapture moistened his pale cheek, he implored heaven to shelter her from every harm until they should again meet, then hastily disappeared among the busy bustle of the multitude, before the bewildered girl had time to recover from her astonishment.

William Higginbottom immediately repaired to a friend of his late patron, his will was made, and safely deposited in his hands, in the event of his not reaching India, where he intended going without loss of time. It was his intention to settle all his affairs abroad, and return as soon as possible to claim his

secretly adopted child, not wishing to withdraw her from her present humble station, until he could himself watch over her, and by his gentle counsel and parental tenderness, check the bad effects sudden prosperity might have on her uncultivated mind.

The fond hopes of the uncle were doomed to be disappointed. He became much worse during the voyage, and expired almost as soon as he reached his magnificent abode. The news of his death was brought to England by General Belville, who, after a long absence from his native land, returned to embrace his child, bringing with him the Indian boy, Pompey, who was bequeathed to the young heiress by her dying uncle, with a strict injunction that he was to be her constant companion and attendant. The lad was an orphan perfectly destitute of kindred, and had

experienced the bounty of Mr. Higginbottom ever since the death of his father, who had lost his own life in preserving that of his master. The uncle knew the heart of his niece, and felt assured that the son of his faithful servant would receive from her benevolent hand all the requisites and comforts of life.

“ He will be a *stranger* and an *orphan*,” thought the dying man; “ and the nature of the little trader must be sadly changed if she does not shelter him from the powers of adversity as carefully as I have done, and with that willing kindness which softens the pain of being dependent. I never can forget that it was her humanity to a poor daughter of Africa, that first introduced her to my heart!”

## CHAPTER V.

WITH a heart robbed of its accustomed lightness, Miss Belville entered the dining-room; traces of recent sorrow were still visible on her pale cheeks, for the conversation of soothsaying Margaret had cast a gloom upon her spirits, and she vainly endeavoured to assume a look of cheerfulness when her father and his ward rose to meet her.

“You are not well, dear Mary,” said Henry, as he conducted her to her seat; the roses have forsaken my sweet sister’s counte-

nance, and a look of care has banished the bright smile of happiness that decked her features in the morning. I trust," he added, kindly, "that it is only a momentary vexation, and that I shall behold you in a few minutes recover your natural gaiety."

Mary assured him that it was nothing relating to herself that had discomposed her serenity. "I have been chatting with a person whom I have known and loved from childhood," she said, as she seated herself at table, where the General had already taken his place, "and I have been weak enough to allow myself to dwell too seriously on her sad stories."

"Margaret is a silly gossip," observed her father, looking archly at his lovely child. "She has ever some idle tale to pour into the willing ear of credulous youth, and much I



fear me Mary Belville is among the simple believers in her mysterious art."

A deep blush suffused the bosom and face of Mary, as she met the glance of Henry Mordaunt, who gravely inquired if the old woman had any objection to unravel the future destiny of his own sex, as he felt a great inclination to learn what would be his fortune in marriage. "Not that I think any one will be troubled with me," he added, gaily.

"All in good time, my boy," said the General; "you shall have a wife some day or other, depend upon it. I'll court for you myself, sooner than you shall die an old bachelor."

Mary smilingly declared it was preposterously encouraging such rare modesty, by her father supposing he possessed more influence over the minds of the young and beautiful

than his ward; and he who had not courage to woo for himself, deserved not to win a bride.

Henry laughed, and protested that his *modesty* would ever be an insuperable bar to his gaining a wife.

“ We shall see in time of what materials your *modesty* is composed,” replied General Belville; “ at present we will drop the subject. I have letters to write which will occupy my time for an hour or two; meanwhile, my modest little miss here will be happy to show you some of our favourite walks.”

“ Ay, do come,” cried Mary, “ if you are not afraid to trust yourself with a giddy girl like me.”

Henry assured her that he felt perfectly secure in his own protection, should she even be in one of her most mischievous moods.

“ There they go for a couple of madcaps,” cried the General, as he watched them strolling through the umbrageous grove that led to the river. “ Nature never formed two beings more calculated to make each other happy. The young rascal is as proud of her already, as I should have been at his age of a pretty girl like Mary. I was not as old as him, when I used to feel as if no one had as much cause for joy as myself; that was when his innocent and lovely mother hung upon my arm, gazing on my face with that pure and girlish tenderness which seemed to say ‘ my world is centred in thy love.’ Those were silly moments,” cried he, returning to his seat, “ deceit and falsehood follow quickly, and experience soon teaches us how little we know of human nature, when we weakly put faith in promises made in the thoughtlessness of youth,

when affection, newly awakened in the throbbing heart, seems as though it could never diminish, or grow cold to the object that first inspired it."

The General was more warmly attached to his ward than he felt inclined to acknowledge even to himself. Doatingly fond of his mother, who was the object of his first and boyish love, he lavished on her only child that endearing tenderness, which could not fail to make a lasting impression on a heart warm and grateful as that of Henry. From a mere boy he had been, unknowingly, entirely dependent on the bounty of the General, for every comfort he had enjoyed since the death of his parents. His beautiful mother lived but a few hours after his birth; and the bereaved widower found himself alone in the world without friends, his marriage having displeased

his own family and that of his beloved wife's, and with a young infant, who had now a double claim upon his parental care, since fate had destined it in its most helpless moments to receive from the humane hands of strangers that attention and watchful kindness so necessary in childhood.

The pangs of the wretched husband were not more acute than those felt by the General when the mournful news reached the town where he was stationed, which was not many miles distant from the spot where Captain Mordaunt had taken lodgings for his adored Ellen during her confinement. Scarcely recovered from the bitter disappointment he had experienced on finding that he no longer possessed her affection, the heart of the General throbbed with anguish, as he recalled to mind her innocent and gentle manners, and the

exquisite softness of those features that were never more in this world to meet his gaze. Another had deprived him of the sad, yet dear privilege of beholding them hushed in the calm sleep of death; it would have been a merciful relief to have poured forth the long smothered and stifled agony, which had for months embittered his existence, over the inanimate form of her who had, unthinkingly, dashed the cup of happiness from his lips, and doomed him to a life of unavailing regrets.

It never occurred to the young officer, that had his beloved Ellen continued faithful to her first attachment, this severe and painful trial would have assailed him in a more terrible and fearful shape; that instead of lamenting the untimely fate of one who was already dead to him, he would have been

called upon to consign to the grave the wife of his bosom, the tenderly-loved being whom he had fondly hoped would have cheered him in the hour of sickness, with her gentle voice and angel smile, and cling to him through life in sorrow and adversity.

Young and ardent in his affections, he would have given the world to have been permitted to watch over her helpless child, and place it in a situation where it would be sheltered from all danger. A perfect stranger to its father, and too proud to seek an interview with one who had caused him so much trouble and uneasiness, he felt the utter impossibility of gratifying his generous wishes. Expecting soon to leave England, he trusted that change of scene, and the duties of his profession, would assist in banishing from his mind the painful remembrance of the past,

and that in another country he might be able to enjoy those pleasures and amusements, which, in his own, had no longer the power to divert him.

General Belville had only attained the rank of Major when he first became acquainted with Ellen Somerville. Nature had blessed him with an amiable disposition and a benevolent heart; handsome in person, and captivating in his manners, he was a universal favourite among his brother officers, and eagerly sought after by the female friends of his only sister, who were ever ready to receive the flattering homage of so fine a young man.

Among the number was Ellen Somerville, the bosom friend of Miss Belville, and a constant guest at his father's house. Her beauty, elegance, and above all, the exquisite innocence that dwelt in every look and word,



quickly won the love of the young soldier. Ellen was not insensible to his constant kindness and marked attentions; she was pleased with the idea of attaching to herself one who was known to be the object of many a speculating mother's plans, as well for the fineness of his person, as for his large fortune. She deceived herself with the belief, that to become his wife was the dearest wish of her heart, and that such an event could not fail to render her the happiest of women.

Portionless herself, her parents were delighted at the prospect of her making so advantageous a match. Nothing was talked of in the Somerville family, but the benefits they would derive from so wealthy a connection. Love was never mentioned or even thought of, nor did they think it necessary to inquire if the fond and generous affection of Major

Belville, was likely to meet with a corresponding tenderness from their lovely daughter. Ellen had determined to consent, whenever her lover declared himself, convinced in her own mind, for she had never allowed herself to think otherwise, that he was the only being calculated to inspire in her bosom a lasting attachment.

A circumstance shortly occurred, that put to flight all the bright and airy visions which had so long dazzled the parents, and blinded Ellen to the real state of her heart. Her cousin returned from Spain, and his first visit was paid to his fair playfellow, whom he had not seen for several years. Far different were the sensations that agitated the breast of Ellen, when she beheld Captain Mordaunt, to those the devoted fondness of the Major had excited. The veil at once dropped from her

eyes, and the fatal reality terrified and shocked her. Young Mordaunt soon became a dangerous rival to the Major, who was absent at the time of his visit, and the unhappy Ellen, distracted by the thought of the fearful step, her impatient and doating lover daily urged her to take, knew not how to avoid the censure which must fall upon her inconstancy, should she accept the hand of her cousin, or how to summon sufficient resolution to brave the misery that must now follow, from an union with Major Belville.

Henry Mordaunt at length over-ruled her objections; his fascinating manners, and delightful flow of spirits, dissipated the gloom of sorrow that the consciousness of acting dishonourably had cast over her lovely countenance, and Ellen felt convinced that the only way to avert the trouble that was hang-

ing over her was to seek safety and protection in the affectionate arms of her cousin. Unknown and unsuspected by her parents, confiding the secret solely to her nurse, who was to accompany her to Scotland, Miss Somerville quitted the home of her infancy, and fled with the enraptured object of her choice, leaving without a sigh all the luxuries and splendour she would have obtained as the wife of the Major, determined to share the fate of her brave but fortuneless cousin.

Before the surprise and anger her ungrateful conduct had excited in the minds of his family had abated, the Major returned ; from their lips he soon learned the utter desolation of his fondest hopes and wishes. Distracted with the idea of losing her, and stung to the soul by her seeming dissimulation and caprice, he yet refused to listen, or to join

in the bitter invectives of his relations, nobly forbearing to censure the unthinking girl, who was daily and hourly the subject of conversation among his female acquaintance, many of whom were secretly delighted at the opportunity thus afforded them of speaking with sneering disrespect of one who had so long proved a formidable rival to the success of their own schemes and deep-laid plans.

The Major was quickly doomed to meet with, if possible, a still severer blow, in the death of the beloved object of his youthful idolatry, than even her perfidy had inflicted on his heart; and in mourning over the fair being thus early called to the silent tomb, all recollection of the past was forgotten, and no other feeling filled the generous breast of the Major but that of pity and affection towards the helpless and motherless child of the lonely

widower. Determined to be of service to the unoffending offspring of Ellen, should he ever have the opportunity, he secretly visited the woman to whose care he was entrusted, and, by the aid of gold, extorted from her a promise, that she would instantly inform him should any thing happen to the father; and, in the event of his being abroad, he requested that she would convey the infant immediately to a friend, on whose kindness he could rely fearlessly, and who would cheerfully afford them an asylum until he could return to England and provide for them himself.

The woman readily consented to perform all that he required, assuring him that she would never divulge without his consent the interest he took in the fate of his darling child. Her own heart beat as warmly towards it as his own, and the honest creature

felt delighted at the idea, that should death deprive it of its remaining parent, it would be adopted and cherished by one who appeared so truly noble and generous.

Through the medium of the person to whom he had been obliged to confide the history of his little protégé, the Major heard frequently during his residence abroad of its welfare; and he eagerly longed for the time to arrive when he should again behold the son of Ellen. Time might have strengthened the likeness, which he fancied he could then trace, of the beloved mother in its infantine features; if so, the babe would possess a still stronger claim on his affection; and, full of these pleasing reflections, the Major was highly gratified by receiving orders to return home.

With a heart lighter than it had been since

his bitter disappointment, he once more set foot upon his native land, after an absence of nearly three years, and with breathless impatience hastened to the dwelling assigned to his adopted child. On reaching the residence of its nurse, he was informed that she had quitted the village only a few days before his arrival, taking with her nothing but her young charge, who, it was reported, she was ordered to convey to some of its relations a distance off, as it had recently become an orphan.

The Major was not long in reaching the abode of his confidential friend, who had received with open arms the blooming boy and his affectionate nurse. She had lost no time in obeying the commands of their generous benefactor, and had sought the shelter of the hospitable mansion his considerate care



had secured for them in case they should be deprived of the home provided by Captain Mordaunt. Long and tenderly did the Major gaze on the sweet countenance of the laughing child, who, as if conscious of the tender feelings he excited, clung round the neck of his protector, pressing his ruby lips to the sun-burnt cheek of the young officer, who clasped him to his manly breast with paternal love, as he inwardly vowed in every respect to supply the place of the parents he had lost.

Faithfully did Major Belville keep that holy promise. The moment the entire charge of the infant devolved upon himself, for the sake of the beloved mother whom he had never ceased to regret, the little Henry became the object of his constant solicitude. Not a day elapsed without his paying a visit

to the family with whom his darling was residing, and fearing that as he advanced in years his spirits might be checked by the painful knowledge that he was wholly dependent on the bounty of a stranger, and wishing to be also loved by him for himself alone, the Major resolved to have him brought up entirely with the children of his worthy friend, who was a clergyman, and one worthy to be entrusted with so sacred an office.

Major Belville also dreaded lest Henry should become acquainted with his real situation; his nurse might betray the secret in an unguarded and thoughtless moment, he therefore deemed it advisable to remove her from about the person of the child, whom he intended should be taught for the future to consider him as the guardian, chosen by his

parents to watch over him during his minority; thus leaving the affection of his adopted son free and unfettered by the galling tie of obligation. He was by this means wholly ignorant of how much he owed to the kindness of his protector, and the happy boy doated on him without any mercenary motive, and for no other cause, but that he always spoke kinder to him than any body else, and took more notice of him than others who visited at the rectory.

It was long before the Major could persuade the faithful woman to resign the care of her beloved charge; even the comforts of independence, which he promised for the rest of her life, failed to charm or win her from her purpose. She had nursed its beautiful mother, and she was determined, as long as she was spared, never to forsake her child.

In vain the Major entreated her to listen to his powerful reasons for requiring from her so great a sacrifice; she was deaf to his prayers and proof against his bribes.

“ I shall never disclose what I have pledged my word shall be kept locked within my own breast,” she said proudly. “ I am neither so ignorant nor so ungrateful for favours bestowed on those dear to me, that I should reveal to the sweet child what his benefactor thinks fit to conceal from him.”

The Major assured her that he was well convinced of her fidelity, and that his only motive for wishing to deprive her of the pleasure of watching over the little orphan, was the fear that if she continued longer with him, he would so fondly remember the nurse of his helpless youth, that he would apply to her when advanced to manhood, for an explana-

tion of many circumstances that he wished him, for the security of his own happiness, to be wholly unacquainted with.

Partly influenced by the dread of displeasing one, who had behaved with so much generosity, and fearing lest the son of her beloved mistress might suffer by her obstinate refusal to obey the wishes of his benefactor, she at last reluctantly consented to quit the place that contained all that was dear to her, and retire to a small house not far distant from the rectory, where she could hear constantly of the welfare of her darling. The only promise Major Belville thought necessary to exact from her was, never to disclose to the object of her love at any future time, unless with his consent, that she had any knowledge of his parents, or that she was any thing but a stranger to himself.

Cheered by the thought of sometimes beholding her beloved boy, although not permitted to speak until sufficient time had elapsed for her features to have passed from his remembrance, the affectionate woman confided the blooming child to the gentle kindness of the rector's wife, who lavished on him the same endearing tenderness as she bestowed on her own children.

Henry was then barely three years old; the caresses of his guardian, and the amusements of his young companions, who eagerly sought to divert the mind of this favourite, soon reconciled him to the absence of his nurse, who was comfortably settled in the snug little cottage, provided for her by the Major, who never forgot to stop at the gate of its well-stocked garden on his return from the rectory, and glad the widow's heart with

the welcome news that her darling was well and happy.

Years passed away, and the child of his adoption realized his fondest hopes. Bearing at times a strong resemblance to his mother, and possessed of a delightful and generous disposition, the Major grew prouder of him daily: every thing that could add to his comforts was instantly obtained, and not a wish was left ungratified by his indulgent guardian. Even when the ceaseless entreaties of his family prevailed, and he became a husband, the destitute orphan of his lamented Ellen was neither forgotten nor neglected for a single moment. Deprived of his wife a short time after the birth of Mary, the Major had no one to thwart his inclinations or defeat his plans; and it became the fond wish of the father's heart, that Mary should prefer the

being he intended should possess half his wealth to any other the world contained.

From childhood both were accustomed to listen with delight to the praises bestowed on each other by the Major, who, while he strengthened their desire to behold one another, wisely delayed the introduction, and forbore to speak of any warmer sentiment than friendship, well knowing that nothing was so calculated to throw a chilling damp upon the young and joyous heart, as the consciousness of being forced by the selfishness of others, to affect a regard which the worldly-minded, with their folly, sophistry, and convenient blindness, too often wilfully mistake for that pure and ardent affection which alone can render the married state a happy one, and such as the tender father wished his daughter to cherish for the son of his adoption.



As soon as Henry was old enough to quit the hospitable roof of the rector for a public school, the Major, ever considerate and thoughtful to those who were dependent on him, invited the lone widow to dwell among his own tenants, on the estate at which he now generally resided, perfectly aware that the spirits of the old woman would sink, when she beheld the idol of her heart quit, perhaps for ever, what had been the home of his happy childhood. His offer was gratefully accepted, and in a few weeks after the departure of Henry, his kind nurse had taken possession of her new and comfortable residence on the Belville estate.

Well was the affectionate kindness of General Belville repaid, now that he beheld those dear and idolized children likely to dwell together in love and amity, and addressing each

other as if they had indeed been born of one parent. Henry had just returned from his travels, and the General thought he could not introduce him to his lovely daughter at a more favourable time. He would have had the opportunity of beholding some of the most beautiful women in the world, and if he should have withstood the influence of their charms, and still continued free, the innocent and playful Mary had a fair chance of making a lasting impression on his heart.

The fond father listened attentively to catch the sound of their receding voices; the joyous laugh of Mary echoed among the distant rocks, as she fearlessly bounded along the steep and uneven paths, and with a feeling of pride and gratitude, the General watched the graceful movements of her light and airy form, until the thick foliage of the hanging-

wood concealed it from his view. Delighted with the evident success of his plan, he sat down to communicate the pleasing intelligence to the worthy friend of his youth, and tutor to his ward; and so perfectly convinced did the General feel, that the son of his own idolized Ellen would become the husband of his daughter, that he never for a moment allowed himself to think that any unforeseen accident might occur to destroy the realization of his long-cherished hopes.

## CHAPTER VI.

IN the privacy of her own apartment Mary had time to reflect seriously on the many strange and mysterious hints that the dear though humble friend of her childhood had unguardedly dropped in the course of their morning's conversation. Dismissing her maid with the assurance that her absence would not inconvenience her, she threw herself into her easy chair, little inclined to sleep, determined, if possible, to recal to mind the words of Margaret. So completely had she been

taken by surprise, and astonished also by the strange manner of the old woman, who was evidently thrown off her guard by the sudden appearance of young Mordaunt and the General, that she could scarcely remember any thing that fell from her lips. Still Mary felt convinced that she had mentioned the father of Henry in a way that proved he was not unknown to her; and yet, if such was the case, why should she disown all knowledge of the family? Margaret had often been questioned by Miss Belville respecting the parents of her father's ward, thinking that, as she had so long been one of his tenants, she might have heard the history of his parentage; but the answers of the old woman were uniformly the same. Seemingly she was as ignorant as herself, therefore it was useless to apply to her for

an explanation; and Mary knew that to enquire any farther into what she had thought fit to conceal, would only offend the pride of Margaret, without satisfying her own curiosity.

Once she had ventured to ask her father if Henry had no stronger claim upon his affection than merely that of being his ward. The General replied that Henry was no relation, but a perfect stranger to his family. He had been appointed guardian to the boy by one who had his interest at heart, and that his own good qualities, exemplary conduct, and dutiful behaviour, were sufficient claims upon his love. Mary was not a little astonished therefore when the General acknowledged that the mother of Harry Mordaunt was the object of his first and tenderest regard; why he had so long kept it secret she could not imagine, unless it was a

subject still painful to his feelings. There was no longer any wonder at the deep tenderness he had always betrayed when speaking of his youthful charge, and Mary sighed, as the annoying thought obtruded on her mind, that he whom she had been early taught to believe the best and noblest of his sex, perhaps possessed as many imperfections and failings as the rest of the world, though the blind partiality of his guardian prevented him from discovering them.

“And yet,” said Mary, “I have no right to suppose him less deserving of esteem than he has been represented. My beloved father would be careful not to deceive his child; surely I may trust to him; for my sake he would not over-rate the merits of one he had destined to become my friend, and constant companion.”

Dreading, even for a moment, to think

that Henry might be less worthy of her love than she had allowed herself to hope, Miss Belville resolved to believe him for the future all that she had for so many years fondly imagined. Yes, thought Mary, he is every thing my father has so proudly described him: the noble, generous, warm-hearted being, for whose dear friendship I have so long sighed.

What will Cathleen think of him? was the question the innocent and happy girl asked herself a hundred times, as she laid aside the dress that Henry had so much admired for its elegance and simplicity, and prepared to retire to rest. "My own loved Cathleen," said Mary, as she thought of her pale face and gentle voice, "would that I could restore thee to happiness, and give thee back thy wonted cheerfulness. Then, indeed, I should not have a wish ungratified."



The first rays of the morning sun beheld Miss Belville on her way to the cottage of Walter Maynard. Wishing, if possible, to see her foster-sister alone, she walked hastily along the high road, hoping that by taking the nearest way she might reach the common before Walter had risen. It appeared singular to Mary, that the father of Cathleen had never expressed either sorrow or alarm at the sudden change that had taken place in the once blooming form and countenance of his only child. The old man attributed the alteration, which was so visible to every one, solely to delicate health; never did the father for a moment seem to suspect that there could exist any other cause. That Walter should be less aware of that extreme dejection of mind which so much alarmed the tenderness of Mary, was scarcely to be

wondered at. Stern in his manners, even to those most dear to him, Cathleen had from infancy checked the wild and playful spirits most natural to her, and assumed a steady and even deportment when in the presence of her father. To Mary, who had been accustomed to behold her gay and full of sportiveness, ever ready to join in each youthful frolic, with confiding kindness to all around her, there was a mystery in both the total wreck of health and spirits that was too fearful to think upon with composure. The purity and innocence of her own mind and actions had long made suspicion a stranger to her breast; but the singular distress of Margaret, when comparing her predicted fate with that of another, the one so bright and unclouded by misfortune, the other so dark that no cheering ray of hope seemed likely

to disperse the gloom that overcast it, appeared to Mary to furnish sufficient and convincing proofs that Cathleen was the person to whom their mutual friend alluded.

With the watchful eye of love, Miss Belville had long noticed that each day robbed the pale rose that yet lingered on the cheek of her foster-sister of a portion of its fading brightness; the half-stifled sigh, and the joyless expression of those lovely features, could not pass unheeded by one who was ever alive to the sufferings of others, and eager to afford with unwearied kindness comfort and consolation to the afflicted. With the most endearing attentions, the affectionate girl had been for months vainly endeavouring to cheer the drooping spirits of her early companion, and to gain her confidence, yet Cathleen's secret remained locked within her own

breast. Her manner was subdued; each word she uttered was followed by a short and half checked sigh; and Mary at length yielded to the conviction that the friend of her childhood was sinking slowly, but surely, to the grave.

The close-drawn curtains of Walter's chamber window did not escape the quick glance of Miss Belville; gratified by the idea of obtaining an interview with his daughter without the restraint his presence would have laid upon their conversation, she hastened her steps, and entered the garden unseen by Cathleen, who was busily employed in examining her favourite flowers. Uttering an exclamation of surprise and pleasure, the pale girl dropped from her hand the blooming carnations, and threw herself into the extended arms of Mary.

“ This is kind, very kind, dear friend!” she softly said. “ I did not expect that you would be able to reach so far from home now that you have a visitor, who I am certain can know but little of the real value of your society if he allows you much spare time.”

Mary replied with sweetness, that a friendship so lately formed would never have the power to make her for a single instant forget the dear companion of her infancy. “ Believe me, Cathleen,” she said, tenderly pressing her cheek, “ if circumstances sometimes make us strangers to each other, and separate us for a longer period of time than affection like ours can bear, my thoughts are ever with thee. I have not a joy, a wish, that does not bring the form of my sweet sister to my view. I am ever wondering on

each fresh occurrence what thy sentiments would be; and if my heart throbs more rapturously than usual, its joyousness is quickly checked when I think that your's, dear Cathleen, would refuse to share its happiness."

Tears dimmed the brightness of the dark eyes that were raised to the lovely face of the speaker, with an expression that seemed to entreat her silence. Mary wished, yet feared to solicit her confidence; she had sought her for the sole purpose of entreating her to trust fearlessly in her long and unchanged affection, and by making her the repository of her secret trouble, enable her to soothe, and, if possible, find a balm for that smothered and mysterious anguish which was evidently destroying her. Still as she gazed on the sorrow-stricken form of the drooping girl, who seemed to shrink with

horror from the slightest remark that could in any way be made applicable to her own situation, the thought of adding to her sufferings by demanding an explanation of what she evidently had formed a resolution to disclose to no one, gave a pang to the heart of the gentle Mary, and made her pause to reflect if it was right to pry uninvited into what ought to be in her eyes sacred, the private sorrows of one of her own sex.

Throwing her arms around the neck of Cathleen, who stood silently before her, Mary entreated her to accompany her back to the villa, and spend the day with them, as she longed to introduce her to her adopted brother, Harry Mordaunt. A slight colour tinged the cheek of her companion, who declined her offer upon the plea of her father being too indisposed to be left for so long a time.

“ Surely, dear Cathleen, you will not refuse my request ?” said Miss Belville, in a tone of disappointment ; “ I shall feel restless and uneasy until I have heard *your* opinion of my father’s ward.”

“ I *will* come, if it be only for an hour,” replied Cathleen, mournfully : “ rest assured that nothing but duty prevents my now returning with you. My father would perhaps deem me neglectful, were I to leave him for a day, and, heaven knows, I ought not to do any thing to merit his displeasure.”

The deep sigh which accompanied the last words, did not pass unheeded by Miss Belville, who forbore to urge her any further, well knowing the strictness of Walter, who, though doatingly fond of his child, expected the most implicit obedience, and unceasing attention.

“ You will not break your promise, dear



sister?" said she, persuasively: "you know not how much I have to say to you; indeed, I have more to ask, and more to tell, than thou couldst hear in a day, much less in one short hour."

Cathleen faintly smiled at the earnestness of Mary, and again repeated her promise to be with her in the evening, should her father take his accustomed stroll before supper. Miss Belville lingered at the door of the cottage, unwilling to retrace her steps to the villa without having gained the information she felt was so necessary to insure her peace, and tranquillize those doubts and fears the words of Margaret had raised in her bosom.

"You were up and busy so early this morning, dear Cathleen," she said, playfully, "that you might have anticipated my visit. I hardly

hoped to find you had left your chamber, though my anxiety to see you, tempted me to make the trial."

"The sun had not risen when I quitted my room," replied Cathleen: "I was thinking of many things last night that kept me waking, and finding it impossible to sleep, I dressed myself, and strolled forth to inhale the freshness of the morning air."

Mary sighed, and observed to her mournfully, that she feared the keen breeze had lost its power of restoring the bloom of health to her almost colourless cheek, which was evidently rendered paler than usual from want of rest.

"You should have no sorrows, dear sister, at your age," she continued, gently drawing her towards her; "surrounded by friends who love you, and placed above the reach of want,

what should make sleep a stranger to your pillow?"

"I have not known what it is to sleep calmly and tranquilly for many months," said Cathleen, whose eyes were bent upon the ground, to conceal the bitter tears that fell from them in showers.

"Heavens!" exclaimed Miss Belville in surprise; "surely this cannot be true. You cannot be really unhappy, Cathleen, and yet refuse to confide in one who would die to serve you?" Mary paused for a reply, then added, with increasing tenderness, "You have no cause to fear my censure, even should your troubles be of your own making; why then do you persist in withholding your confidence from me, and at a time when my advice, even inexperienced as I am, might be of service to you?"

Cathleen was well convinced that to the beloved friend of her childhood she might without fear, communicate the cause of her sufferings; that in her affectionate sympathy, she would find balm and consolation for those wounds which time seemed incapable of curing. Yet how was she to summon sufficient courage to tear the veil from the eyes of the innocent and guileless being who, knowing sin only by name herself, would perhaps sink with shame and horror, when convinced that the sister of her love, whom she had so long worn in her heart, as a creature perfect and worthy of her own example, was a fallen and degraded wretch, who dared not to think of the enormity of her own offences.

Mary led her to a seat; placing herself by the side of the weeping girl, she pressed her cold and trembling hands within her own.

“ It cannot be, my sister, that you are too proud to seek comfort from my long-tried friendship ?” said Miss Belville, while her voice became tremulous from the intensity of her feelings ; “ pride is a poor substitute for tenderness that has grown from infancy, and strengthened with our years ; a love like that can scarcely feel a change, even when slighted or neglected by the object for whom it has been cherished. Why then does my sister fear me ?”

Cathleen trembled violently ; hiding her face on the shoulder of her companion, she sobbed long and convulsively, and as she clung to the agitated bosom of Mary Belville, who appeared sinking to the earth under the weight of this, her first real trouble, the thought of blessed hours, unstained by crime, when she was herself as pure and spotless as the fair form her arms encircled, came back to her

memory with a maddening and fearful rapidity, bringing at once the appalling certainty that shame, disgrace, the loss of love, and perhaps of kindred, must follow the disclosure she was now urged to make.

Mary, who was terrified at the distress and anguish which Cathleen, who appeared to have flung aside all restraint, now unheedingly gave way to, could only mingle her tears in silence with the sufferer. Fearing to question her further, and feeling too wretched and unwell to proceed home immediately, she listened anxiously to every movement in the chamber above, not knowing what excuse to make for Cathleen, should Walter descend to breakfast before she had recovered from her agitation. Beseeching her to moderate her grief, Mary promised never again to touch upon a subject that gave her so much pain.

“It must be revealed,” said Cathleen, in a

firm voice, pressing her hand to her burning brow, as if to still its throbbings; "there is that which must be told, even though disgrace and ruin follow. Better to know the worst at once, though it be more than nature can endure, than bear this agony of suspense, this ceaseless dread of ills to come, that imagination paints more horrible than the reality can be."

Mary caught the hand of the speaker :

"You will not refuse my prayers, Cathleen?" she exclaimed; "you will trust me — I feel assured you will. You will no longer deny me your confidence, and I shall now be able to soothe your sorrows, and teach you to forget your troubles."

"Not *here*! not beneath my father's roof must it be told!" cried Cathleen, wildly, as she cast a fearful glance towards the door of Walter's chamber; "not in the dear, quiet

home of my infancy, can I dare to breathe a word of that ingratitude and folly, that, when known, may rob me of all that makes existence bearable. At some future time," she continued, "I will endeavour to summon sufficient fortitude to speak of that, which hitherto I have scarcely dared to think of."

Mary, pale and sick with terror, raised her swimming eyes to the face of her foster-sister. "For my sake," she said, with a look of such deep earnestness, that Cathleen almost shrunk beneath her steady gaze, "you will not break your word; you have awakened doubts and suspicions I never felt till now; they will make peace and happiness strangers to my bosom, until the hour arrives when your own full and fair confession shall throw a light on what now seems involved in fearful mystery."

Cathleen appeared gasping for breath,



catching hold of her sister's dress, who had risen to depart, and gently detaining her, she said, in a voice of anguish, "You know not what you demand; you are ignorant of the bitterness of the trial which you would have me make: that disclosure once made, and even you, who have loved me as the earliest and dearest being that has lived in your remembrance from childhood's hour to this, will cast me from you, as a thing despised, degraded, and no longer worthy to possess the affection of a heart like thine."

"Cathleen, you know not the strength, the power of a sincere and disinterested friendship," replied Mary, mildly, "or you would not, for a moment, dread the loss of my affection, at a time when you most need its soothing influence. Whatever may have been your indiscretions, unhappy girl, your fatal error

will bring its own punishment in the upbraidings of a never-slumbering conscience. Never shall the voice that has so often praised thee, be heard to join in the censure of the world, or add to thy sufferings by unkind reproaches. In me you will find a sister as willing to shield thee from contempt, and share thy troubles now, as she has been to gratify thy wishes, and partake thy pleasures in thy days of happiness."

"Thou art all goodness, beloved and inestimable friend, and I feel that *you*, at least, will not abandon me to misery," cried the wretched girl as she followed Mary to the door, who felt eager to quit the cottage unseen by Walter. Pressing her lips to the pale brow of her sister, she entreated her to banish from her mind the painful idea that the acknowledgment of her fault would de-

prive her of that affection she had so long enjoyed.

“ I shall never desert thee, Cathleen,” were the parting words of Mary, “ never forget that, though unfortunate, you are still the dear and idolized child of my foster-mother.”

Bitter were the tears that Mary shed to the memory of passed happy years. Once more in her own chamber, which, by means of a private staircase, she had gained unseen by any of the family, she gave way to the violence of her grief, which, in the presence of Cathleen, she had restrained, from the fear of adding to the distress of the unhappy girl. Perfectly convinced in her own mind, that by some rash action the friend of her infancy had forfeited all hope of happiness, she determined not to breathe a syllable of what had passed between them, resolving to shield her from the expo-

sure she so much dreaded, by every means in her power.

“What will become of her!” exclaimed Mary, as she flung herself distractedly on the bed. “Oh, Cathleen! what hast thou done? what evil deed committed, that thou art so sorely stricken — so hopelessly wretched?”

## CHAPTER VII.

MISS BELVILLE had scarcely closed the gate, that opened on the common from the back door of the house, before Walter Maynard descended from his sleeping-room. Kissing the burning cheek of his child, whose eyes were riveted on the receding figure of Mary, who had chosen to return by the road, that was not visible from the old man's window, he desired her to prepare his breakfast, as he had business to transact which called him from home until night. Cathleen flew to obey his orders; with trembling hands she

placed the different articles on the table, dreading to steal a look at her father's countenance, or answer his many questions, lest the tremulous tones of her voice should betray her secret emotion.

The father watched with a feeling of pride the tall and graceful form of his only child as she glided noiselessly round his seat, attending to his wants with eager alacrity, and winning gentleness. Smiling kindly on her as she seated herself silently by his side, he proposed that she should spend the day with Miss Belville.

“ I know thou art dull and melancholy, my child, when thou hast no one to speak to but thy birds and favourite squirrel,” he said, “ and thou canst not spend thy time better than in the society of such kind friends as Miss Mary and her father.”

Cathleen thanked him for his kindness,

observing that she would, with his permission, delay her visit until the evening, as she had many things to occupy her time during the day.

“ Please yourself, love,” replied her father, rising and taking his hat; “ thou wert never fond of gossiping and gadding like thy neighbours. It would be well for some parents if they had cared to instil into the minds of their children a love of what is right, as I have done.”

A tear fell on the blushing cheek of Cathleen at the last part of Walter's speech; pressing his lips to her forehead, the old man blessed her, and bent his steps to the village. Proud to an excess, Walter Maynard was little loved by those who were not the tenants of his master. From them he always experienced homage and servility, and

that was oftener, in reality, paid to the good gifts he had frequently to distribute among them from the General, than to the stern and cold-hearted collector of their rents. The excessive loveliness of his own child, and the quiet modesty of her behaviour, gratified his pride and made him look down with contempt on many of the neighbouring families who had been less fortunate in their children.

For the frailty and weakness of human nature Walter could find no excuse; fortunate in the possession of a child who had never for a moment disputed his authority, or ventured to express an opinion opposite to his own, he believed that all the indiscretions of youth sprung solely from the negligence and over-indulgence of its instructors. Eager to witness what effect the misfortune, la-



mented so much by Margaret, had upon the widow Enfield, he bent his steps to the small inn she had kept for many years, and which was generally known by the name of the Belleville Arms. Walter looked upon the widow as a weak and frivolous woman, who had wantonly brought up her children to follow the bent of their own inclinations, without making the smallest effort to check their insufferable vanity and love of finery.

“ So much for parents who are too idle to teach their offspring that a good name is better than fine apparel, and the flattery of the great,” muttered Walter, as he took his seat in the bar, which, owing to the earliness of the hour, was free from customers.

“ What dost cry for, woman?” he said, turning sharply round to the weeping mother; “ a few tears cannot wash out the sin and folly of years.”

"It is enough, Walter, to make a mother shed tears, to see all that is dear to her grow up into womanhood, full of health and beauty, to be destroyed and brought to shame by some false hypocrite, who cares not for a parent's sufferings," replied Mrs. Enfield mildly, without raising her head from the table on which it rested.

"You should have taught your children better, woman," was the stern reply of the old man. "Had you early learned them to fear God, and respect yourself, they had remembered your counsels, and loved them better than disgrace and infamy."

The wretched mother said nothing, and the steward, not in the least moved by the continued sobs that bespoke a heart overcharged with grief, quietly filled his pipe, without offering one word of consolation as

a balm to the wounds he had inflicted by the bitterness of his remarks.

“I always told you, widow,” he said, as she placed before him his brandy and water, “that you were doing wrong in bringing up those girls in the manner you did. There is not a soul in the village that don’t think the same, though, perhaps, they are not honest enough to tell you so. You were too headstrong to listen to my advice; if you had done so, this would not have happened. Had there been less whining and a little more severity when Phœbe turned out badly, this lass had not dared to take the same road.”

“It is hard for a mother to close her doors and her heart against a fallen child,” replied Mrs. Enfield in a low voice. “What pity can we expect from the world, if those near-

est and dearest to us refuse to believe our repentance, and have no compassion for our infirmities?"

Walter rose impatiently from his seat. "It is a fine thing, Kitty Enfield," he exclaimed, "to talk about pity and compassion. The tenderness of a mother's feelings may be seen, and quite as fully appreciated, by the good, when they are prompting her to watch over the mind and morals of her offspring, teaching them to walk humbly and thankfully in the sphere of life allotted to them, as when called forth on an occasion like the present one. Far better would it have been for you had your's urged you to think more of the future welfare of your children, and less of present enjoyment. As it is, as you have sown, so must you expect to reap."

Walter concluded this speech with a hearty

draught of liquor, and resumed his pipe. Kitty Enfield fixed her eyes upon his stern countenance, a slight expression of anger was visible for a moment on her own as she turned it towards the steward, but the withered features of the widowed mother quickly resumed the subdued and calm look of settled grief.

Kitty was a mild and peaceable woman; it was not a little unkindness that could cause her to speak sharply or severely. She had borne much bitter sarcasm and ill-nature from the steward, who had long thought it his business to condemn the conduct of her family, and her own bad management of it. The heart of the bereaved mother was full to bursting; the disgrace of her children, for she had been unfortunate in both her daughters, made her feel reckless of the troubles that might follow any offence given to the

great man in office, and as she gazed on the proud and exulting father, a bitter feeling of revenge struggled for several moments with the natural gentleness of her nature. She felt that a few words would humble him to the dust, and inflict pangs perhaps even greater than those he had so unfeelingly scoffed at.

It was well for the happiness of Walter that his fate was in the hands of a mother, and one who, though derided and trampled on herself, when misery could scarcely bring her lower, felt in that moment of silence all the tender pity of the christian parent rush into her bosom, forbidding her to give utterance to that which, in striking a fatal blow at the pride and presumption of the father, must inevitably have ruined the child.

The voice of Walter recalled the wander-

ing thoughts of Kitty, whose head had once more resumed its resting position. "Cheer ye, widow!" he cried gaily, "and don't be down-hearted. To be sure you can't expect to have quite as much custom now that you have no fine ladies to wait on the young 'squires, who will always carry their money where there are pretty girls to be seen. You must now content yourself with such steady sober fellows as myself, who will bring you perhaps quite as much good cash, and a better name to your house. It's a good thing, Kitty, for you after all, that you have got rid of the girl," he continued. This inn, with a little careful management, may become as respectable as any in the village. To be sure, it would have been as well to have seen them both married."

Walter was partly provoked to give utter-

ance to this last speech by the stubborn silence that the unfortunate object of his taunts persisted in maintaining. The inattention paid by Kitty to his conversation provoked his spleen, and mortified his consequence, reminding him also of the slights and black looks he had been accustomed to receive from her daughters, in return for his unasked-for counsel and advice.

The widow's cheek became flushed, and the gushing tears dried on her swollen eyelids, reaching no farther than the lashes before they were quenched by the scorching heat that seemed to strike from her burning brow upon the rest of her features.

"Walter Maynard!" she said wildly, "you are a father; thy pride and sinfulness has not yet met with its punishment in this world. The time *may* come, though heaven, for the



sake of *one*, keep it far distant; when you will yourself feel what I am now suffering. You have a young girl of your own, look to her well; thy home is cheerful and happy now; her soothing voice and dear-loved step is heard within its walls; when she has passed away, thy hearth will be desolate."

"There is no fear of my daughter doing aught that can banish comfort from my dwelling," replied Walter coldly; "she is too good a child to cause her father a moment's uneasiness."

"May you ever rest as you now do, in quiet and peaceful security," said the widow. "There are many who think themselves so favoured of heaven, that none of the ills of life, which are daily crushing those around them, can ever reach their own door. The heartless and unfeeling who, fortunate them-

selves, close their ears and hearts to the lamentations of those who for some wise cause Providence has deprived of every earthly comfort, have need of something to awaken them from their fearful slumber. Thou art one of those dreamers, Walter Maynard; awake, and look well to thy treasure; should any thing happen to thy own fair child, thou wilt have more pity to bestow on others who have to mourn as I do."

A smile of contempt played around the scornful mouth of the steward; resting his pipe quietly in the corner of the fire-place, he surveyed the speaker with a look of mingled astonishment and anger.

"You speak, woman," he said slowly, and raising his tall athletic figure on his seat, "as if you wished these troubles to fall on me and mine."

"Heaven forbid!" fervently ejaculated the widow. "For the sake of the dear child, who has never wronged me by word or deed, may that dark hour never come. May she never provoke the wrath of one whose pride is greater than his love. No, Walter," she continued, "a mother cannot so far forget, even when forsaken, the affection and tenderness with which she reared her own, as to be able to wish harm to the offspring of another woman."

"When you see Cathleen Maynard gadding to fairs and wakes, giving her precious time to those so far above her, that the world will speak, and justly, of such folly," replied Walter, "I'll give you leave to think, nay, say, I am mistaken in my daughter, and that she may be less modest than she seems. I have no cause to suspect my child,

her pleasures and innocent enjoyments are all found within her home. Her birds and flowers beguile away the time when I am absent from her. It is not fine and gaudy clothes, dances, and moonlight walks, my girl can find delight in. She has been taught, Kitty Enfield, to know her station, and, thank heaven! she is content with it."

"Content is a blessing few enjoy perfectly," said Kitty: "yet I sincerely hope that nothing may ever banish it from the breast of Cathleen."

"Amen," cried the father, rising from his seat, and at the same time wishing her good morning. Kitty saw him depart without deigning a reply, hurt at his evident want of humanity, at a time when she was little able to bear the ill-natured remarks she was well assured were heaped upon herself and

children. Walter inwardly laughed at the misfortunes the widow predicted might fall upon his own head. Nothing had power to weaken the confidence he felt in the purity and innocence of his own child, who was all that his ambition and ungovernable pride had laboured to make her;—beautiful in person, elegant and simple in her manners, and meekly submissive to every humour and capricious whim that sprung from the sourness of his temper.

Cathleen meanwhile, unconscious of what had passed at the inn, and that her name had been called in question, could not help pausing at the widow's door as she passed in her way to the villa, and endeavoured to catch a glimpse of Kitty, to whom she longed to offer all the consolation that lay in her power. The old woman, who was busy in

the bar, discerned her figure as she still lingered near the threshold, and hastened to join her, knowing that her father had forbidden her to enter any place of public entertainment.

Cathleen extended her hand with a smile of welcome as the widow approached her, and observed that though she was late in waiting on Miss Belville, she could not resist the opportunity of stopping for a minute to enquire after her welfare. A tear moistened the cheek of Kitty as she returned the gentle pressure, and thanked her for her kindness.

“ I am as well in body as one that is ill at ease can be, my child,” she replied, in answer to Cathleen’s anxious enquiry after her health. “ There is no balm I fear for an aching heart that man can administer.

All that we can do is to bear patiently what God thinks proper to afflict us with, until his gracious mercy sees fit to relieve us from our troubles."

"True," said Cathleen, whose faltering voice bespoke the sympathy she felt for the sorrows of the widow. "True, Kitty, there is no medicine, I fear, for the mind's anguish; and yet we may soothe and soften the poignancy of grief, by mingling our tears with those who truly compassionate our sufferings, and strive with gentle kindness to obliterate the memory of the past."

Cathleen felt that the eyes of the widow were bent upon her flushed features with a look of scrutiny. She had addressed herself to the mourning mother in a tone of enquiry that seemed to ask an answer from one whom she thought could remove her doubts.

Kitty was well convinced that the observation of Cathleen sprung not from experience; she knew the reserved and timid disposition of the young girl too well to believe that a single word would escape from her lips that could betray the extent of her own secret wretchedness.

“ You say rightly, my dear child,” she gravely said; “ it is indeed a relief to the bruised spirit to pour out its sorrows on the breast of sincere and pitying friendship. There is a deadly poison, a canker that dwells within concealment, which withers the young form, and destroys the fresh bloom of youth. It is in vain, dear girl, for the wretched to dissemble; the smile of contentment is a poor mask for a faded and care-worn countenance to wear.”

The heart of Cathleen beat violently; with-



out daring to raise her eyes from the ground, she leaned for support against the door; her trembling limbs seemed unable to sustain the weight of her slight and wasted figure. Fortunately for her, several voices from within summoned the widow to return to her duties at the bar. Relieved from the painful task of replying to the last speech of Kitty, which she could not help thinking was meant as an allusion to her own altered and dejected appearance, she exerted her strength to resume her walk, cheered by the thought that the widow, who evidently felt astonished at the change which had taken place in her once buoyant spirits, must be perfectly ignorant of the cause from whence that change proceeded.

## CHAPTER VIII.

WHILE Cathleen was slowly and thoughtfully bending her steps towards the villa, Mary, restless and uneasy, had declined accompanying her father and Henry to Higginbottom Hall, and was waiting impatiently for the arrival of her young friend, whose undisguised sorrow in the morning had made her seriously unhappy during the day, from the fear that in their recent short and hurried interviews, she might unguardedly have made use of some expression that had added to the affliction of her

foster-sister, and made her unwilling to lay herself open to further censure.

The General watched every movement of his darling child, as with hasty steps she paced the floor of the drawing-room, while Henry, perfectly at a loss to account for the peevish answers of his adopted sister, resolved that the General should proceed alone to the Hall, while he remained at home to satisfy his curiosity. Determined to learn the result of Mary's constant watching for the last two hours, he whispered his intention to his guardian, who, with an arch smile, warned him to be careful, as he might, perhaps, suffer for his temerity.

General Belville stole quietly out of the room, unperceived by his daughter, who stood silently at the window, hoping every instant to catch a glimpse of Cathleen Maynard, as

she descended the steep path from the common. Henry threw himself on the sofa, and pretended to sleep; he expected that Mary would insist on knowing why he had remained at home, after promising to pay a visit to the Hall; and he felt no inclination to return a true answer to her inquiries.

Mary had long purposely avoided mentioning Cathleen's name in the presence of her father, dreading to speak of her beloved friend, lest the General should unintentionally create suspicion in the breast of his ward, by expressing his own astonishment at her grave and altered deportment. From the same cause, she had forborne to tell him of the invitation she had given Cathleen, to spend the evening with her. Much as she wished her to become acquainted with Henry Mordaunt, she had refrained from requesting him to remain

and meet her; thinking it better, under existing circumstances, to trust to chance to bring about the first interview between her two dearest friends.

Mary was, therefore, not a little surprised at beholding her father steer the boat across the stream, without any person with him; turning suddenly round, her eyes fell upon the extended form of the pretended sleeper: his features were entirely concealed by a lace scarf she had flung on the couch, and which enabled Henry to watch all her movements without the dread of his artifice being discovered. Mary at first seemed not to notice his presence; reseating herself at the open window, she once more resumed her solitary watch, without deigning to cast another glance at the sofa, on which reclined the apparently careless form of him, who, in reality, was

dearer to her than all the rest of his sex. Henry was mortified at her seeming indifference: "She might have spoken to me," he thought, as he cautiously drew aside the lace to gain a clearer view of her graceful figure.

"How unkind is this neglect and want of confidence!" said Mary, in a tone of disappointment.

"Neglect, and want of confidence!" muttered Henry to himself; "does Mary then deceive those in whom she ought to confide fearlessly? Does she cherish affection for one unknown to her father? It must be so," thought young Mordaunt; the General assured me that his daughter had no received lover! this, then, accounts for her wish to remain alone, her walks of a morning, and her restless anxiety of late. A deep sigh escaped him, as

he again threw himself back on the sofa, and re-covered his face.

Mary started at the sound, and turning round, perceived that Henry still appeared to slumber. Tired of her own melancholy thoughts, and weary of watching, she advanced with a light step, and seated herself quietly by his side.

“Are you awake, Henry?” she inquired, in a low voice, as she bent gently over him.

“How tormenting and vexatious is this long and undeserved silence,” murmured young Mordaunt, still pretending to sleep; “how wretched does the neglect of those we love render us in absence.”

The cheek of Mary became colourless as she started from her half-leaning position, and threw herself upon a chair. A strange and overpowering feeling, such as she had never

before experienced, seemed entirely to take possession of her. The few words uttered unthinkingly by the irritated Henry, had given birth to the most galling and painful suspicions, which threatened, with one blow, to wither and destroy the future happy prospects of the romantically attached girl. The heart of Mary Belville was capable of the most lasting attachment and disinterested friendship. Nothing had power to weaken its faith, or diminish its fervour towards those she loved, except neglect and unkindness from the object who had won her genuine confidence ; she could behold the errors and indiscretions of those dear to her, listen to the world's censure on them, and still remain unchanged.

Yet Mary was no heroine ; the least semblance of coldness or slight towards herself, struck to her heart, her wounded pride took



alarm, and the proud spirit struggled to forget the past, and taught her to look with affected indifference on what once had been her idol. With such sentiments, the happiness of Mary was at least doubtful. It was long before she sufficiently recovered her composure, to enable her to again address her adopted brother, without betraying her emotion. The idea of his being secretly devoted to another, perhaps engaged, without possessing candour and sufficient honour to acknowledge it, created in her mind doubts and painful misgivings, as to the real existence of that sincerity and noble frankness so much applauded by her father.

To herself, Mary could not accuse him of acting with dissimulation, as he was not obliged to make her his confidant.

His open avowal, that no woman had yet

possessed the power to make a lasting impression on his heart, she now remembered with contempt and indignation, considering it as an artful subterfuge, to which he had purposely resorted, in order to conceal his real sentiments from a too indulgent guardian. Thus did Mary Belville, who thought no sacrifice too great to ensure the happiness of others, suffer her pride and unconquerable spirit to dash the cup of promised bliss from her lips, when one simple question to him, whom, at any other time, she would have asked a hundred in her wild and playful manner, would have restored peace and tranquillity to her bosom, which was now tortured by the most agitating doubts.

Henry, though piqued at the idea of an absent lover depriving him of the tender and dearly-prized attentions of one who had be-

come unspeakably dear to him, never for a moment imagined that the words he had sportively uttered would have any other effect on the volatile Mary, than that of exciting her curiosity. Fortunately for the mortified girl, she had flung herself on a seat behind him, and thus escaped the conjectures her agitation might have given birth to in the mind of Henry.

Determined to conquer her weakness, Miss Belville slowly uncovered her face, moist with tears, and in a voice scarcely audible, demanded if he was yet awake. Before Henry could reply, the door opened, and Mary, with an exclamation of delight, sprang into the arms of Cathleen. The long and fervent kiss imprinted by Mary on the lips of her foster-sister, during the moment she remained locked in her embrace, spoke volumes to the wounded

spirit of the drooping girl, and assured her that no change had come over the love of the warm heart that now breathed against her bosom.

Almost instantaneously recovering her natural gaiety, Mary advanced to where young Mordaunt was standing, and introduced him to her friend: placing the hand of Cathleen within the one he smilingly extended, she said, with marked emphasis:

“ This, Henry, is my foster-sister; and if the request is not an unreasonable one, and you can, without breaking your vows to the *absent*, spare any portion of your valuable esteem, I would claim it for the dear friend of my childhood.”

Henry pressed the passive hand to his lips, and assured Mary that if it was her desire, he would for the future divide his affection be-

tween them, as the bosom friend of his sweet adopted sister, must ever possess an undisputed claim to his regard.

“Do not trust him, Cathleen,” said Mary, archly, while a deep blush ‘mantled on her cheek; “he would deceive thee, dear sister, and promise thee more than he has to bestow; should he justly satisfy all claimants to his love, I fear me very much, that you and I, like two poor widows, will be obliged to be contented with our thirds.”

“Indeed!” replied Cathleen, “am I then to understand that another has a right to a share of that esteem which Mr. Mordaunt has so generously offered to bestow a half upon my unworthy self?”

Henry again took the fair hand of Cathleen, and before Mary could return an answer, as-

sured her that her suspicions were without foundation.

“ There is no being in existence,” he said, looking earnestly in the varying countenance of Mary, “ that has any claim upon my affection, except the dear friends within these walls. Those who doubt the sincerity of my love, may live to lose it; but never, while the possession of it can add to their happiness, will it be transferred to others. It is a poor gift to offer, I acknowledge,” he continued, as he sweetly smiled on the pensive face that was raised with a look of trust and confidence to his; “ but poor as it is, my second sister, if you will deign to accept a share of so worthless a bauble as the brotherly affection of a giddy, thoughtless fellow, like myself, I trust to be able to convince you, that our beloved

Mary, in this instance, is mistaken, and that I have offered no more than what is truly mine to give."

The frank voice of the speaker fell like music on the ear of Cathleen, who looked like some figure of spotless marble, on which the sculptor had lavished all the magic of his art, to render exquisitely perfect, as she stood calmly and silently before the admiring Henry. Never did two beings present a greater contrast in form and feature, than did the lovely girls, whom the quick glance of Henry now rested upon alternately, as they stood with their arms entwined around each other. Cathleen, with her tall and gracefully proportioned figure, her small and perfect features, and marble brow, unadorned by a single ringlet or ornament, was a master-piece of nature. The dazzling whiteness of her skin made her neck

and shoulders like one unsullied bed of snow, her jet black hair was braided round her head; presenting a striking difference to the clusters of shining curls that wantoned in wild profusion about the face of Mary, softening the brilliant flashes of the laughing eyes, whose look, at times, became so intensely searching, that even Henry shrunk from their scrutiny.

With a melancholy smile, Cathleen thanked him for his kindness, assuring him that the gift he proffered would to her be an inestimable one.

"There is one thing alone that checks the pleasure I should otherwise feel in accepting so great a treasure," she said, in a hesitating tone.

"And what is that, dear Cathleen?" inquired Miss Belville.

"The fear that I may not always be deemed worthy to retain it."



Mary, who to all appearance, had now perfectly recovered her spirits and playful vivacity, since the declaration made by Henry, proposed that, if Cathleen was not too much fatigued, he should accompany them in a sail down the river, to beguile the time until her father's return.

“ I have lain in the boat many an hour on a night like this,” she said, “ while it floated at will on the smooth, clear surface of the stream, unruffled by a single breeze, so hushed and wrapped in slumber seemed all nature.”

Cathleen expressed her willingness to be of the party ; and Henry, carefully enveloping the fair forms of his young companions in their cloaks, to shield them from the night air, with a light heart placed himself between them, and they proceeded towards the water.

The moon was shining in all her splendour above them, and Mary, dropping his arm, tripped through the long shrubbery-walks with a quick step before her friends, breaking the silence of the hour by singing snatches of her favourite songs, and occasionally striking the guitar she carried with her. Henry vainly called to her to wait and join them; Mary, wild with delight at the beauty and stillness of every thing around her, paused not to look back on those who lingered at a distance.

“How beautiful,” said Cathleen, mournfully, “is the undisguised joyousness of the young heart, before it has felt the chilling touch of sorrow and disappointment, or learned from experience to check the exuberance of its rapturous feelings.”

“If I am not mistaken,” remarked Mor-

daunt, "I think Mary informed me you had entirely passed your lives in the society of each other?"

"I believe, that from infancy," replied Cathleen, "we have never been separated, with the exception of a few months. During the occasional absence of the General, when his profession called him abroad, we were both entrusted to the care of a confidential person, who resided at the villa in the capacity of housekeeper, and to whose maternal kindness the General fearlessly confided us in our infant years. My father, at that period, generally accompanied him when he was obliged to leave England, as the General preferred having one near him on whose fidelity he could rely during his residence in India, to placing his affairs in the hands of strangers."

"I no longer wonder at the devoted attachment that appears to subsist between yourself and Mary," observed Henry; "and I consider myself most fortunate in being admitted into such sweet society, and allowed to share in the affection of two such gentle hearts."

They had now reached the boat in which Mary reclined, rocking herself carelessly, with her face so close to the water that the tresses of her hair seemed floating on its surface. She looked like some fairy basking in the moon's unclouded light, as fearless of the treacherous element beneath her, as she was entranced and delighted by the exquisite appearance of the scenery around her.

Springing on her feet, she extended both her hands to Cathleen, who was more timid than herself, and with sisterly kindness assisted her into the little bark, at the same

time requesting Henry to unloose the chain which fastened it to the bank. Placing Cathleen in safety between them, she unfurled the snowy sails, allowed the vessel to follow the course of the wind, which was beginning to murmur among the stately trees that were here and there planted in thick groups by the side of the river.

Henry gazed with rapture on the happy countenance of the lovely girl, which was upraised with an expression of wonder and admiration to the clear sky, now sprinkled with myriads of glittering stars, that every moment to the dazzled sight, seemed to increase in brightness and in splendour. Cathleen besought her to indulge them with one of her favourite songs, as the stillness of the scene would enable them to hear the beautiful echo that proceeded from among the rocks on the

opposite shore. Henry joined his entreaties, and Mary, with willing alacrity, struck her guitar, and sung the following lines :

## SONG.

In happier hours I gave to thee,  
Love that no change has known ;  
A heart that asks not to be free,  
Though shaken is thy constancy,  
And truth and bliss are flown.

The fading wreath that binds my brow,  
Is like thy love to me ;  
Its transient sweets to time must bow,  
And, like thy false and broken vow,  
As soon forgotten be.

Mary, observing the features of Cathleen assume a melancholy expression, as she concluded the last stanza, playfully called the attention of Henry to a succession of lively airs, which she now executed with the brilliant

touch of a master. Her repeater now warned them it was time to return to the villa.

“ I think, my dear friends,” said Mary, who was fearful lest the damp arising from the water might increase the indisposition of Cathleen, “ that it will be advisable for us to land, if practicable, and walk through the village. Do you not agree with me, Henry, that it will be more prudent than returning in the boat ?”

Henry was delighted at the idea of strolling through the romantic rocky scenery by which the residence of his guardian was approached, and readily consented to steer their light vessel to the first spot which offered a convenient landing-place. It was not long before they discovered an opening amidst the low under-wood, that seemed favourable to their design. Henry leaped ashore to receive his lovely

companions ; and Mary first consigning Cathleen to his care, fearlessly bounded to his side.

“ And now, Henry,” cried the blooming girl, as she laid her hand confidingly on his arm, “ tell me truly if you do not think our own dear village an earthly paradise ? Can there be a sweeter spot than my childhood’s home, so calm, so quiet, so rich in nature’s gifts, that it is not to be wondered at, that my gentle Cathleen and myself have never cherished in our breasts a thought beyond it, or a wish to leave it.”

“ My beloved enthusiast ! my charming sister !” exclaimed Henry, as he pressed the soft hand within his own ; “ how many blessed and happy hours will thy light and buoyant spirits give to those around thee, while the unruffled temper that has never felt the chill of discon-



tent, will strew thy path with thornless flowers, whose glowing tints resemble thine own sunny thoughts."

"But you have not answered my question," cried Mary, earnestly,—“Do you not think as I do, that there is a calm contentment seems to reign around this spot, which, while it adds to its beauty, impresses the beholders with the gratifying and delightful idea, that tranquil happiness dwells within the walls of each lowly cottage?”

“There can be little doubt, dearest Mary, of the numerous comforts those enjoy who are fortunate enough to be tenants on the estate of my inestimable guardian,” replied young Mordaunt; “and you, my sweet sister, derive much pleasure, I am certain, from the delightful occupation of administering to the wants of those who stand in need of your assistance.”

"During my dear father's residence in India," said Miss Belville, "I became intimately acquainted with the dispositions and habits of all who reside on his estate; by his desire, myself and Cathleen were constant visitors at their humble dwellings, and long before we were able to discern if our gifts were bestowed on the deserving, we were permitted to relieve all who craved our bounty, so anxious was he that those who were dependent upon him should continue to enjoy the same comforts in his absence which he never failed to bestow when present himself."

They now approached the home of Cathleen. Walter was leaning over the low railing which enclosed the beautiful flower garden from the common: the clustering honeysuckle and jessamine scented the night air, while the beds of choice and fragrant plants

which surrounded the cottage, proved that Walter was as great an admirer of flowers as his master. With one of her sweetest smiles, Mary returned the bow of her father's steward, expressing a hope that he did not think her selfish in depriving him of the society of his daughter at a time when he was suffering from indisposition. Walter assured her that he felt perfectly recovered from his illness, and it was his wish that Cathleen should devote the whole of her leisure time to the child of his revered master.

Miss Belville affectionately embraced her friend, promising that either herself or Henry should call at the cottage on the following day, should she not have an opportunity to leave home. "Keep up your spirits, my dear sister," she whispered to the fearful Cathleen, who had followed her to the door,

while Henry and the steward were engaged in conversation.

“ I will, dear Mary,” replied the grateful girl, flinging her arms around the fairy form of her companion. “ I will listen to thy kind counsel ; I will fearlessly entrust my secret to thy keeping, for I shall feel assured that the friend of my childhood will not forsake me.”

Henry now advanced and reminded Mary it was late, and that the General would, in all probability, be uneasy at their long absence. Pressing the extended hand of Cathleen, he drew Mary gently from the house, and wished the steward and his fair daughter good night.

Mary, as she leaned on the arm of the mirthful Henry and listened to his animated discourse, felt her spirits gradually revive, and before they had proceeded half way

across the common, she laughed and talked to her delighted companion as if nothing for a moment had ever cast a chill over the glowing warmth of her feelings. As Henry had conjectured, his guardian had been the first to reach home. With open arms he welcomed the return of his darlings, who apologized for their long absence. Henry described their ramble in terms of rapture, declaring that the estate of his guardian abounded in so many beauties, he was fearful that he should never be able to devote sufficient time to explore half of them.

The General smiled on him affectionately. "And why not, my dear boy?" he said, with a look of kind encouragement; "thy time, Hal, is thine own, and every thing that can make it pass happily, that thy guardian has it in his power to bestow, is thine also."

Henry pressed to his lips the hand of the General which rested on his arm, as the kind-hearted veteran looked earnestly in his face at the conclusion of his speech.

“ My friend and father ! ” exclaimed young Mordaunt with energy, “ how can I ever sufficiently testify my gratitude for thy unceasing kindness, shewn to me from infancy ? ”

“ By consenting to cheer by thy presence the declining years of one who will ever continue to be a parent to thee, Hal, as long as life is spared,” said the General. “ You do not dislike the idea of sharing my home, as well as my affection, with Mary, Hal ? ”

“ My dear sir,” cried Henry, with evident emotion, “ I should indeed be undeserving of your love, could I for a moment feel averse to accept your generous proposal. If I cannot find perfect happiness beneath *this* roof,

blessed with the society of my sweet sister and yourself, I ought to live to know the want of kind and sincere friends."

"There is something in that saucy face of thine," replied the General, "that assures me ingratitude is not among thy faults. What says my little Mary?"

"Dear father," said Miss Belville, dropping her eyes to the ground, which until now had been fixed with an expression of intense earnestness on Henry, "dear father! what a strange question. Yet I will venture to affirm that Henry will never disappoint your expectations."

"How kind of you, dearest Mary, to think thus favourably of me," exclaimed young Mordaunt with subdued tenderness. "To be thought worthy of *your* good opinion, is the fondest wish of my heart."

"The adopted son of my beloved father will ever possess my affection and esteem," said Mary in evident confusion; "that is," she added, while a deep blush suffused her cheek, "I shall always look upon him in the dear light of a brother."

Henry appeared grave, and Mary, convinced that he was attentively observing her, retired to the other end of the room without waiting for a reply, and busied herself in examining some fresh plants brought from the green-house.

The General was the first to break silence, by observing, that the family at the hall appeared mortified that Mary had not paid them a visit, and introduced her new friend to their acquaintance.

"We will walk as far as the hall after breakfast to-morrow," said Miss Belville, re-



joining them, "if you are not otherwise engaged. I have no doubt they feel anxious to see Henry, for they have long been prepared to love him as my father's ward."

Henry readily agreed to accompany her if the morning was fine, observing, with an arch smile, that the earlier his penance began, the sooner he should learn resignation. Mary warned him laughingly to arm himself against the attractions of the dark-eyed heiress, as she was in possession of a most powerful magnet in the shape of thirty thousand pounds, and that its wonderful influence would doubtless delude many poor victims to worship unwillingly at the tempting shrine.

"I am persuaded, Mary, that you are wrong in your conjectures," observed the General. "You have not formed a just estimate of the character of your adopted bro-

ther, if you seriously suppose that money will have power to bias him in the choice of a wife."

"I did not say, dear father, that Henry would pay his first visit predisposed to love the young lady on account of her wealth, I only cautioned him, lest the little blind god might, in one of his mischievous moods, take prisoner a heart that has hitherto proved invincible against all his efforts to ensnare it."

"Do not alarm yourself on my account, my sweet friend," cried Henry gaily; "there is one thing that will prove an insurmountable bar to my obtaining a place in the affections of Miss Higginbottom."

"Your unfortunate modesty, Henry?" said Mary with assumed gravity.

"As it would be a terrible insult to suppose one so witty and discreet as yourself

cherished so silly a foible as curiosity," replied Mordaunt, "I will at some *future* time convince you, my sweet monitress, how impossible it is for this rustic beauty to inspire any passion in my breast warmer than esteem."

"No promises, my dear boy, no protestations," exclaimed the General, who sat enjoying the disappointed looks of his daughter. "You may fall over-head and ears in love before you are aware of it. We shall soon find you out, Hal; I, for one, know all the symptoms as well as I know my A, B, C. Nervous head-aches, constant sighs, loss of appetite, disordered dress, occasional deafness, and absence of mind. I shall be sure to find you out, Hal, at the first starting off. What a poor lackadaisical, half-starved, disconsolate Philander, I'll lay my existence,

thou wilt be when that day comes, Hal. Cupid is ever most unmerciful to those who set him at defiance."

"Your picture of a lover is so highly attractive, my dear sir, that I have firmly resolved so humiliating a day shall never arrive."

"A most wise resolution, dear invincible stoic!" exclaimed Mary with a provoking smile; "but would it not have sounded better, and looked more in character with that extreme modesty, which in the long list of your many virtues holds so conspicuous a place, if you had spoken thus:—That day I have resolved shall never arrive; that is to say, if I, in my great wisdom, can prevent it."

"Henry must be as old a soldier as myself," cried the General laughingly, "before he can venture to say that he is perfectly

on his guard against any sudden approach of the enemy."

"I certainly am fairly defeated in this instance," replied Mordaunt, "and as I find it impossible to continue the contest any longer without receiving from the fire of my antagonists a continuation of random shots, by no means suited to my taste, I think the greatest proof of wisdom I can evince on such a trying occasion, will be to make an honourable retreat. I therefore, my dear sir, leave you to the full enjoyment of your victory, and wish you good night."

"But, my dear Hal, if you will only remain a few minutes longer, you shall find that I am as great an adept in curing wounds as I am in inflicting them."

"Don't disturb yourself, my kind considerate guardian, mine are mere scratches,

not any thing that would do honour to your superior skill; I almost doubt if they would cost you a pennyworth of plaister."

"And yet, my dear boy, you appear most suspiciously sore," exclaimed the General.

"I would advise you, sir knight, to retire to rest," said Miss Belville archly. These same scratches may, if irritated, become wounds before you are aware. Come, my dear father," she continued, laying her arm softly round his neck, while she pressed her cheek to his, "I think a sweet good night will be of wonderful service to us all."

"True, darling!" cried the General! "these late hours I fear will steal the roses from thy cheek, my fair daughter, and make thee as pale as our poor Cathleen."

"And she looks as if the warm blood of happy youth had frozen ere it reached those

fine and delicate veins that are hardly perceptible in her blanched and speaking countenance," observed Henry thoughtfully.

Mary almost started from her father's arms. With a look that betrayed her secret embarrassment and uneasiness, she replied quickly, that Cathleen from a child had never possessed much colour, and that ill health had deprived her even of that. Mordaunt returned no answer; and Mary hoped that what she had affirmed would prevent his asking any questions for the future concerning her beloved friend. Presenting to him her hand with an affectionate smile as they parted for the night, she bade him remember to meet her early at the breakfast-table, that they might walk to the hall before the heat of the day commenced.

Miss Belville felt hurt and surprised at

the observation which had fallen from Henry with respect to Cathleen. It was evident that what she had laboured so earnestly to prevent, had nevertheless occurred; and that, in spite of all her precaution, the dear friend of her infancy was likely to experience some inconvenience from the scrutiny of Mordaunt, whom she could not help thinking would not mind a little trouble, any more than the rest of his sex, to satisfy his curiosity if once excited. Determined, if possible, to induce Cathleen to confide to her the cause of her unhappiness at their next meeting, Mary passed many a sleepless hour in wild and harassing conjectures as to what might be the result of that dreaded interview, and in striving to banish from her mind every suspicion injurious to her foster-sister. Tired at length with dwelling so long on a sub-



ject that gave rise to many bitter and painful ideas, and weary with fatigue, the kind-hearted girl sunk to rest, to dream of that pure and perfect happiness her warm and guileless soul experienced when thinking of him the mysterious Margaret had prophesied would be the future arbitrator of her fate.

## CHAPTER IX.

THE morning was delightfully fine, and the sun had barely risen above the tops of the majestic wood which bordered one side of the river, when Henry Mordaunt, accompanied by his adopted sister, strolled through the rich pasture land that led the shortest way to the hall, pausing frequently to admire the well-fed cattle belonging to his guardian, which were drowsily feeding on the grass and wild flowers that sparkled beneath their feet, looking like a bed of crystal

as the heavy dew rested on their leaves and glistened in the sun.

Mary was unusually thoughtful; her eyes were bent upon the ground, as she silently leaned on the arm of her companion, while Henry, who felt as little inclined to be talkative as herself, left her to the quiet enjoyment of her own thoughts. Suddenly raising his eyes from the path on which he had been steadily gazing for some minutes, he enquired which way they were now to bend their steps, as two roads presented themselves equally attractive. Mary pointed to the one before them. Passing through the gate, they began to descend a deep valley that appeared to continue for nearly a mile, each meadow gradually sloping towards a green and shady lane that was visible at the bottom of this earthly paradise.

"See!" cried Miss Belville, gently pressing the arm on which she leaned, as she pointed to two female figures that were a considerable distance before them. Henry followed the direction of her hand, and quickly discovered the objects who had attracted her attention.

"It is an old woman and a young girl," he exclaimed, after taking a longer survey of their persons as they slowly turned their steps towards the high road.

"It is the good-natured heiress and dear Margaret," said Mary, quickening her pace, and hurrying her companion forward. Henry apprised her that it was useless to attempt to overtake them, as the distance was much greater than it appeared to the eye.

"Perhaps," rejoined Mary, "we may yet reach them, as it is most likely they will rest

on the way. Betty is one of the most considerate of human beings, though, at first sight, you will only think of her as an ungovernable hoyden. I will answer for her making Margaret sit awhile under her favourite oak after her long walk; she is too kind to allow the old woman to proceed to the hall without stopping to refresh her aged limbs."

"You are determined, my dear sister, to make me feel interested in this favourite of fortune. I suppose I shall be compelled to admire her many excellent qualities, even if I despise her wealth."

"We should always, dear Henry, be ready to acknowledge the goodness of an individual, even should they not exactly be formed to please our taste."

Henry smiled affectionately on the ardent

speaker, who looked anxiously in his face at the conclusion of her speech.

“ True, sweetest Mary,” he replied ; “ we may know how to estimate justly the virtues of our friends, without cherishing in our hearts a warmer sentiment than esteem.”

They had now gained the bottom of the valley, but neither the old woman nor her youthful companion were to be seen. Mary felt disappointed, and observed with a sigh, that she feared Margaret would suffer for her imprudence in venturing so great a distance.

Margaret and her young friend had, as Mary conjectured, continued their walk without pausing to rest, in order that they might reach the hall in time for breakfast. The old woman had become a great favourite with every member of the family, Pompey excepted ;

they always welcomed her with smiles to their hospitable board, whenever the weather and her own health permitted her to ramble so far from home. Betty was constant in her visits to the cottage of the aged fortune-teller, her kind heart prompting her to cheer the lonely hours of the widow, with her merry songs and lively stories, while Pompey was studying with the different masters, who had been principally engaged on her own account. Betty, reckless of accomplishments, and unable to bear the slightest restraint, generally contrived to slip out at one door, as these *savans* entered by another, leaving the Indian to enjoy the full benefit of their undivided instruction.

Betty could read tolerably well; and in her own opinion, her writing was no mean specimen of penmanship; and what could she want to

learn more, she thought. "You know, dear Margaret," she would often say, as she sat, the picture of content and happiness, rocking herself and the dog in the widow's easy chair, "I can read the Bible very well, you often tell me; and what can any body want to learn that will do them any good, more than that?"

Margaret, who was not exactly of the same opinion, urged her to improve in her handwriting. "You write very badly, my dear child," said the old woman, "and it is quite time that you should devote a few hours each day, to use your pen like a lady."

"I shall never have to write to any one but my sweetheart, when I get one," replied Betty, with the most touching simplicity; "and if he loves me, he won't mind having a little trouble in making it out; but perhaps



he won't be able to write much better himself."

Margaret never failed to look with wonder and amazement for several minutes on the innocent face of the speaker, at the conclusion of those simple speeches, while the bright eyes of the heiress were raised to the withered countenance of the old woman, with an artless and confiding expression, that often checked the hasty, yet well-meant reply of her companion.

Betty no sooner threw open the window of her chamber, and beheld the beauty of the morning, than she determined to hasten to the widow's cottage, and persuade her to take the opportunity of the fineness of the weather, to pay a visit to her parents, who had often inquired why they had not seen her lately at the hall. Margaret started from her

pillow, as the low knock, given by her young visitor on the window, roused her from her sleep, and demanded, in a sharp tone, who it was that disturbed her at so early an hour. The frown of ill-humour quickly vanished from her features, when the sweet childish voice of Betty met her ear, who unclosed the casement sufficiently to admit her blooming face.

“ See,” she cried, “ what I have gathered for you, as I passed through the garden ;” and she held up her apron to the window, full of the finest strawberries. Margaret smiled. “ And then, I remembered how you enjoyed the last I brought you, when I mixed them with milk and sugar,” she continued, “ and so I stopped at the dairy, and begged them to give me this nice mug of cream.”

Without waiting for a reply, the kind girl laid her treasure on the ground, while she

climbed through the low window, and unfastening the door, quickly deposited her presents in the little store-closet of Margaret, and then urged her request that she would rise and accompany her home. Margaret, who had scarcely had time to shake off her drowsiness, sat rocking herself in the bed, with her head resting on her knees, feeling but little inclination for the exertion of dressing. Betty, not in the least discouraged by the reluctance she evinced to comply, busily employed herself in selecting from a small chest of drawers, those articles of apparel she knew Margaret would sport on the occasion. Placing every thing in order, that the widow might have no extra trouble in attiring herself, she commenced performing those household duties she knew would occupy her humble friend a longer time than the length of their walk

permitted. The birds were cleaned and fed, and the rest of the dumb favourites supplied with fresh water from the well, and a double allowance of provisions, to make amends for the absence of their mistress. This done, Betty once more ventured to approach the bed, and remind its occupant that it was time to rise.

Margaret made a hundred excuses, each one of which proved fruitless, as Betty's forethought and care had anticipated all that she would herself have done. Betty assured her that she need not trouble herself about any thing, as she hoped she had recollected all that was necessary to be performed, if not, she would complete her task while she was putting on her clothes. It was impossible for Margaret to cherish ill-humour, while the warm-hearted girl repeated, for the sake of

banishing her scruples, all that she had done ; and Margaret, perfectly restored to her usual good-nature, began hastily to attire herself.

“ There is one thing that I have forgotten,” cried Betty, who was patiently holding the pins, which she offered singly to the trembling hand of Margaret, as she needed them,

“ And what is that, love ? I thought thy care had remembered every thing : I could not bethink me of one thing that was neglected.”

Betty reached down the small, green watering-pot, that hung against the wall, and with an arch smile, held it before the old woman.

“ Mercy on me !” exclaimed Margaret, “ thou hast not heeded my poor flowers ! Haste thee, love, and give them a good watering before the sun grows too hot. Ah ! well-a-day ! my head is fit for nothing—it would

have been a terrible job, if thy memory had been as bad as mine."

Betty soon returned to the house, and to her great joy, found Margaret ready to accompany her. Reaching her ivory-headed walking stick from the corner of the room, and carefully fastening the windows, Margaret took the offered arm of the lovely girl, who begged her not to be afraid of resting too heavily, as she was perfectly able to bear her weight, without feeling the slightest inconvenience. Betty was delighted with every thing around her; each wild flower she passed was more beautiful than the last she had gathered, and must be added to the nosegay she was forming for Margaret, whose spirits gradually rose, as she beheld the unrestrained happy playfulness of her romping companion.

who little imagined that Mary Belville was treading the same path, at no great distance from her.

Margaret often looked back, to admire each verdant meadow as she quitted it for another ; for a moment she rested on a low stile, while Betty plucked from the hedges the wild roses and honeysuckles that grew in abundance ; but poor Margaret's eyes were not strong enough to perceive that the darling of her heart was hastening after her, and vainly endeavouring to overtake her.

The high road gained, they quickened their steps, and to the infinite satisfaction of Margaret, soon entered the delightful grounds belonging to the hall. Betty, with a look of triumph, conducted her aged friend to the breakfast-room, where the family were already assembled. Mrs. Higginbottom entirely for-

got the severe lecture she had determined, with the reluctant consent of her husband, to give Betty, as soon as she deigned to make her appearance, as she kindly welcomed the widow, with the natural benevolence of a heart, not quite forgetful of less prosperous days.

Pompey was the only one among the happy group whose features wore a dissatisfied air. To him, Margaret was an object of dread, and the negro would sooner have walked a mile out of his way, than pass after nightfall the cottage of the mysterious woman. From the servants, who placed implicit faith in her art, he had learned that the keen-eyed widow could read the future destiny of mortals; and Pompey, who was not quite as enlightened on many subjects as those around him, imagined her to be nothing less than some witch,



or sorceress, whose very look had power to render his fate miserable, if such was her will.

As soon as he beheld the aged woman resting on the arm of his young mistress, advance towards the hall, he, at the great hazard of overturning the table, and smashing Mrs. Higginbottom's favourite set of china, hastily snatched up his own cup and saucer, providing himself at the same time with a plate of toast, sufficiently large to furnish him with ample employment, should the fortune-teller make her appearance in the breakfast-room, and thus prevent him from obtaining a fresh supply. Full many were the glances of antipathy and fear which Pompey now cast towards that part of the chamber where Margaret was comfortably seated near the fire—for Mrs. Higginbottom found it impossible to

forget old times sufficiently to dispense with its cheering appearance, even at the beginning of August, declaring that she preferred seeing a good blaze in the chimney, to the best dinner that could be put before her.

Seated on a low stool, the large, old-fashioned window-seat serving him for a table, the little Indian silently demolished his meal, without daring to join in the conversation of those he simply imagined were all dealing in witchcraft, while they continued to partake of the same food, and mingle their voices with that of the sibyl. Great was the joy of the terrified boy, when, casting his eyes on the winding path, that was visible from where he was stationed, he beheld Miss Belville and young Mordaunt hastily advancing. Turning his head slowly over his shoulder, to be assured that the glance of the evil one was not

upon him, he gained courage, by degrees, to raise himself gradually from his seat, while his open mouth and distended nostrils, plainly indicated how much he dreaded the observation of the object of his dislike and fear. Once firmly on his feet, which position he had succeeded in gaining without attracting the notice of Margaret; still there was another difficulty to surmount,—how was he to reach the door unseen? Fortunately for him, Mr. Higginbottom was in the middle of one of his long stories; slipping his feet out of his shoes, he crept across the floor, never for a moment possessing the power to withdraw his eyes from the mysterious woman, whose head, as she listened to the tale of wonder, had almost sunk upon her bosom. Turning suddenly round to make some inquiry respecting what she had just been told, her glance met that of

the black, who only ventured to make his escape step by step. No sooner did he perceive that the dark orbs of Margaret were bent upon him, than, with one spring, he bounded to the door, which opened at his touch, and without stopping to look behind him, he flew along the newly-gravelled road, entirely forgetting, in the agony of his fright, that the shoes he convulsively grasped in his hand, would be of infinite service to shield his feet from the sharp stones that almost lamed him.

An exclamation of alarm broke from the lips of Mary as he approached them, while Pompey, speechless, and nearly breathless, could only answer their many questions by a succession of the most unintelligible signs. Miss Belville, whose fears led her to suppose some serious accident had occurred at the hall, having with difficulty succeeded in pacifying

the trembling boy, entreated him to explain the cause of his agitation, and singular appearance. Pompey, after many excuses for his inconsiderate conduct, which were made in a tone hardly audible, as he sat on a large stone while he replaced his shoes on his feet, at length confessed, to the utter astonishment of Mary, that the presence of Margaret had occasioned all his fears.

“ You were not always so much afraid of Margaret Stanley,” observed Miss Belville, half in anger, and yet scarcely able to restrain her laughter, as she looked at the rueful visage of the negro boy.

“ No, missee,” replied Pompey, shrugging up his shoulders, “ Pompey not know when him first see people, whether they good or bad. Pompey no like wicked woman.”

“ Surely, Pompey, you are mistaken; you

cannot mean that Margaret is otherwise than good?" said Mary, with a look that betrayed her displeasure.

Henry, who had been a silent spectator of the scene, now begged Pompey to explain himself, as he did not doubt of his ability to do so, and in a way that would prove satisfactory to Miss Belville, if he felt inclined.

"Ah! kind Massa Mordaunt!" cried the boy, not daring to raise his eyes to the countenance of Mary, "Pompey him very sorry to offend Miss Mary; but him always tell truth when him asked a question, for lilly Missee say him need not fear any one but God."

"True," replied Henry, "she says rightly; and now, my brave lad, tell me your reason for regarding Margaret Stanley with such evident aversion."

“Pompey’s blood run cold, and him shake all over,” exclaimed the Indian, “when cunning woman look at him. Pompey no like be conjured by ugly old witch.”

Mordaunt, with a look of surprise turned to Mary for an explanation of Pompey’s singular speech. The smile of good-humour once more brightened the features of Miss Belville, as she said :

“You forget, dear Henry, that the worthy Margaret professes to unravel the dark mysteries of years to come. The servants at the hall have most probably made the wonders of her art the subject of their discourse before the silly, credulous boy, who, not entirely understanding the meaning of their words, has been led to believe that the harmless creature deals in spells and witchcraft.”

Henry laughed immoderately, to the great

discomfiture of Pompey, who expected to have met from his kind friends, sympathy and consolation. Mary turned towards the mortified boy, who had retired to a short distance from where they were standing, and, with a look of kind encouragement, invited him to join them in their walk. Passing her arm through his, she endeavoured, by every persuasive argument, to convince him of his error. Pompey listened attentively, but the eloquence of Mary failed to remove his fears, and before they reached the hall, he had become firmly resolved to shun the apartment which contained the hated intruder. No sooner had they ascended the long flight of marble steps, by which the door was approached, than Pompey made his premeditated escape. Stealing round the house, with a quick and noiseless step, he succeeded in



gaining his own bed-chamber, where, locking himself in, he, with a feeling of returning confidence, imagined he might remain secure from the powerful spells of the fortune-teller.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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